











# Matador

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*by Marguerite Steen*



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# MATADOR

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by

MARGUERITE STEEN

LONDON

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TO  
FRANCISCO GALVEZ GOMEZ



# One

**T**HREE things were necessary to Don José Díaz Marquez, as air and bread and water are necessary to other men: the deference of his equals, the respect of his superiors, and the obsequiousness of his inferiors. He would not have raised his little finger to command any one of them; each was valueless, save as spontaneous tribute to a reputation which had once resounded through the length and breadth of the country.

The appearance of his short, compact figure in the cafés which he patronized was a signal for gestures of deference; gestures which he acknowledged gravely, with an impeccable air of convention and respectability. In public he seldom relaxed; in the privacy of his own patio, where, on summer evenings a selected company of friends gathered to enjoy the Flamenco, he displayed a grand urbanity, while preserving his air of mysterious superiority to his companions. Such a trait of character, which would not have endeared the ordinary Andalusian to his fellows, was pardoned for the sake of a reputation which had passed into legend. If José had not received his cornada in Madrid in 1922, said some of his admirers, not so much would have been heard of Belmonte.

Meeting him casually and conventionally, face to face, one might, as a stranger, have taken him for a priest. He had, like many bull-fighters, that air of preoccupation, of almost terrifying remoteness which distinguishes men who are intimate with death. He had the preternatural sobriety of poise and demeanour that accompanies a strong sense of personal dignity. His manners

were, like those of the majority of Spaniards, beyond reproach; and he was totally lacking in the quality of humour, although capable of a sardonic amusement when, by indulging it, his dignity was not liable to be jeopardized.

Out of doors he still walked with the slight strut of the paseo, his chin tilted, as though towards the President's box. His eyes, date-brown, were narrowed, their expression abstracted and slightly insolent. They were close-set on either side of a small straight nose, with nostrils of a quivering delicacy. Small featured and sallow, his face resembled a mask of antique, brownish wax: close, secret, and yielding little of his personality to the casual observer. Only in his face his age showed itself: in that expression of the successful matador that blends so strangely a century of wisdom, patience, and resignation—the expression one may find also upon the faces of priests and dedicated souls all the world over.

Small and dapper, with square shoulders and narrow hips, his trick of crossing the ring on tiptoe had earned him, at the beginning of his career, the nickname of *El Bailarín*—The Dancer. He was aware that his lack of inches did not show off to advantage the difficult richness of the matador's costume. For that one requires a stature like Villalta's; the embossed splendour of the jacket, with its heavy encrustations of bullion and fringe, is unequally balanced by the closely moulded breeches: a little man may look ridiculous in it—and *El Bailarín* was hypersensitive to ridicule. He invented the tiptoe gait as a means of adjusting the proportions of his upper and lower halves, and it is curious that among the many reasons assigned by the aficionados for his odd and individual movement, not one hit upon this, the simplest and most obvious explanation.

The esteem which Don José enjoyed among his contemporaries was strengthened by certain material considerations. In Spain a retired bull-fighter, if he has been long enough in the ring to establish a reputation, is sure of public respect. In Granada to-day, if one chooses, one may enjoy an excellent manzanilla in an ex-matador's wine-shop; a fashionable young man may



gratify his taste for elegant headgear at the shop kept by José Moreno, 'Lagartijo Chico'. It gives one an emotion, let me tell you, to receive one's glass from the hand that has trailed the cape cunningly across the nose of a furious bull; an almost voluptuous thrill runs through one, as a silver-grey fedora is poised above one's head by a man whose last experience of the ring was revolving on a bull's horn. Here one has the explanation of the fact that ex-matadors, when they go into business, always make money. It should be conceded that they are almost always greedy, mercenary, and not above sharp practice, when necessary.

Don José Díaz Marquez had not found it necessary to set up a business. He retired from the bull-ring to the life of an independent gentleman; not, it must be admitted, upon his earnings, for, although these had been vast—towards the end of his career he was getting at least a thousand pesetas a bull—he had not always lived as discreetly as he did after his retirement. But, after the manner of successful matadors, he had married a rich wife, several years his senior, who gave him three sons before she died, in bearing the third. With the money she brought him, he was able to consolidate his already considerable reputation: to employ an impresario and a first-class cuadrilla, so that, within a year of their marriage, his star leapt suddenly to its zenith, which, save for a brief period of eclipse, following on an unfortunate incident at Ronda, it maintained for fourteen years: a long period for a brave fighter. He passed, with outward equilibrium, into the dangerously inebriating position of first-class matador, travelling in state from town to town, spending money like water, fêted, courted, acclaimed on all sides: vulnerable only in that Achilles-heel of the matador, his personal vanity, which was unappeasable, and snatched greedily at every tribute offered to it.

The house which he occupied in Granada, a part of the property which had come to him with his wife, was situated in that deserted region which one may enclose in a triangle drawn between the three points of the Plaza Nueva, the Puerta Real

and the Teatro Cervantes. It is the dead heart of Granada, that putrefies behind the false prosperity of the few commercial thoroughfares which form its boundaries. The white dust lies silted about the wide unfinished surfaces of squares which owe their existence less to design than to the hand of the house-breaker. At some moment an altruist had said, 'Let us make a clearance of all these old and dangerous houses; let us get air into our lungs': then, like so many altruistic efforts in Spain, the impulse had dissolved in the irresistible *mañana*, and left the task half done. Here and there yawn excavations, as for shallow cellars; here scaffolding buttresses the façade of a building condemned a decade ago, but the scaffolding itself is already historic. A bitter exhalation of the past rises from the broken stones; an air of fatality and resignation advertises, from every wall and window, the futility of human endeavour. The place is asking only to die, to become one with the white dust that piles itself against the doorsteps.

Without design, with co-ordination the squares break into one another, forming a labyrinth to the stranger who rashly attempts to use them as a short cut from the theatre to the Reyes Católicas. At night they are almost completely beautiful: broken sections of the sapphire sky show themselves between irregular chimney-stacks; light glows rose-coloured through a *reja* set high in a wall lilac with moonlight. But in the day-time there is something unspeakably sinister about the region; figures vanish too abruptly into the narrow gullies where the walls topple towards each other; a well-dressed person crossing one of the open spaces in broad daylight becomes suddenly ambiguous, his purpose suspect.

Don José Díaz Marquez was too accustomed to the neighbourhood to notice its influences. The house which he occupied preserved something of its ancient dignity, by being broken apart from its neighbours. One side was a mass of scaffolding which obscured the verdigris-green of a magnificent *reja*; the others were coloured with the faded pink of a dying rose. The roof, of ancient saffron tiles bedded in lichen, soared into a *mirador*, whose open sides framed a glimpse of blue sky. The doorway

showed the Moorish influence in a pointed archway, and led into the patio in which was concentrated the social life of the house. The patio, with its palm-trees, its vast majolica jars, and small tinkling fountain, was overlooked by the windows of the house's two storeys. From it a flight of stairs ran up to the broad gallery upon which the rooms of the upper storey opened. From the exterior the house had a grim, even a forbidding, aspect, which seemed to centre in a single small shutter of immemorial antiquity, bleached into pewter-colour by the sun, which hung awry, as it had possibly done for a quarter of a century, in front of an upper window; the interior, on the contrary, seemed bright, almost gay, owing its gaiety in part to the scrupulously whitened walls. Although a widower, Don José was well attended by his servants, who, after their kind, swept the dust under the heavy furniture but produced by some means that outward dazzle of cleanliness which satisfies the eye.

Here lived Don José Díaz Marquez and his three sons. It was not a desirable neighbourhood in which to rear boys; this fact had been brought to the notice of Don José by his friend the Señor Don Alonso Quintero. There was a dubious little wine-shop on the corner, a brothel directly opposite, and a disreputable cabaret within a stone's throw. Why, asked Don Alonso, would he not make an effort to sell the property, and rent one of the admirable flats which were situated at the farther end of the Calle des Mesones? The situation was near enough to his favourite haunts to make the suggestion practicable—but Don José's memory, which was good, reminded him that his friend Don Alonso dealt in real estate, and most probably had an interest in the proposed flat; he shook his head gravely. 'If my sons wish to visit a brothel, do you imagine that my taking a house in the Alpujarra would prevent them?' he pointed out, with reason. You could not get the better of Don José; it was one of the things which made him respected among his acquaintances.

The house, which had once had a number, and a street, lacked now postal direction; but to the *habitués* of the town it was spoken of as the Casa del Matador—sufficient guide to such

as had business with Don José. He found the place agreeable enough; he had no liking for change, and saw no point in exchanging the noble spaces of its old rooms for a modern flat in Mesones. So he continued to live and to receive his friends there. The freedom of his status as widower had not, at the end of eleven years, begun to pall on him; he had plenty to think about, and had arranged his life after his own fashion, gravely, with a scrupulous regard to the proprieties and the approval of his most constant visitor, the priest Don Antonio Urquiola, who had charge of the education of his sons. Not even his most intimate friends could, for example, state with assurance that Felipa was his mistress.

Felipa was the only feminine member of his household. Old Inéz, who had kept house for him since the death of Doña Laura, was long past her womanhood: a gnarled husk, crippled with arthritis, she still hobbled from room to room, keeping up her pretence of supervision, but in reality she did nothing; often she would fall into a species of trance in the middle of what she was doing, and then nothing could arouse her until the condition passed of itself. In these trances she appeared to be blind, deaf, and dumb; she would remain, standing or sitting, exactly where she happened to be when the state came upon her, her lower lip dropping away from her few discoloured teeth, her eyes of milky blueness staring at nothing at all.

On more than one occasion she had been discovered thus by Don José himself, in his bedroom.

Sometimes, in the hot weather, during the hour of the siesta—always, in that part of the town where Don José lived, an hour of suffocating heat—he would go to his room, after almuerzo, strip himself, and fling himself naked on the coverlet of the square, four-poster bed. Above the foot of the bed, tilted upon the wall, was an old, smoky mirror, in which, while the consciousness of Don José hovered in the borderlands of sleep, he would sometimes look at his own body, pale against the ruby-coloured coverlet; at the seamed and puckered design of cicatrice and stain which tattooed its surface, the knotted ropes of degenerated

muscle, the thick black matting of hair on chest and legs and arms. Sometimes the sight of this body—his matador's body, the battered record of his exploits—roused in Don José's mind an unregenerate memory of women who had been moved by the sight of it in the candle-light that heightened its significance. He would receive an impression, as through the eyes of a stranger, of that physical part of himself which, time past, had stood for the *whole* in his self-concept. Now, while the flies crossed and recrossed the space above his head, filling the room with their small, malicious orchestration, sometimes settling upon him and being idly slapped away, he received some confused intimation of a double entity, of himself and his body as two separate creatures—and, generally, at this point, he fell asleep, and his slow, quiet, voluptuous snores added another layer to the house's texture of silence.

One afternoon he awoke, suddenly, to that consciousness of another presence which so often disturbs a sleeper. As his eyes flashed open he saw old Inéz, standing half-way between the bed and the door, and his male pride took umbrage that she should thus come upon him naked. But, as he was about to open his mouth and order her from the room, he saw that she was in one of those trance-moods when she saw nothing save some mysterious thing that was taking place in her own soul. Curious, he watched her, standing there blank and inhuman as an old olive-tree, and, presently, his curiosity gave place to a kind of uneasiness, a formless and superstitious dread of something invisible yet malignant, which seemed to have entered the room and curdled like a cloud about the figure of the old woman.

Old Inéz blinked, sighed, and her eyes lost their glazed and sightless look. They came to rest upon her master. She looked at him calmly, as one may look who has out-lived the disturbances of sex, and, to his surprise, she came hobbling towards him.

Don José shrank, involuntarily, as, with her dry first-finger, she dispassionately traced the hideous scar of his last cornada upon his abdomen. The action, which also tickled him, sent a thrill of pure horror down into the recesses of his body—as

though some evil spell lay in the tip of her finger. She could not raise her head, which was driven down between her shoulders by her disease; but her eyes rolled upwards, till all that was seen of them was the netted yellow ball. It seemed to Don José that she smiled with a secret sly triumph that deprived him of his authority as her master, and made him victim of a power with which she was devilishly acquainted. Then she shuffled from the room.

Don José lay very still upon the bed. Virtue had gone from him. Weakness, a profound sense of futility in the face of some oncoming calamity, had drained his limbs of their strength. There was something under his roof—some presence—which made a mockery of all his certainties, whose cold breath upon his life-structure froze it into brittleness, so that, at a mere mischievous pinch of two fingers, it would crackle like an egg-shell. . . .

He roused himself, with a snort, from this state of hypnosis. It was necessary to resume his clothing; to place the broad-brimmed black hat firmly a little on the side of his head; to take his walking-stick and descend to the patio in search of his own dignity. An angry resentment urged him to get rid of old Inéz, some much less explicable motive told him that, while she lived, he must keep her.

It was she who found Felipa, to do the housework when her infirmity forced upon her the unwelcome truth that she was no longer capable, single-handed, of looking after the household. No one knew anything about Felipa; she appeared unheralded in their midst, with all her worldly possessions tied up in a tablecloth; she stood like a caryatid under the arch of the vestibulo with her bundle upon her head; she was incredibly weary and travel-stained. It was not until the next day that it was discovered she was beautiful.

‘What is your age?’ Don José asked her.

‘I do not know, señor. I am not young . . .

Her age lay, apparently, between thirty and forty; an age at which the average Spanish woman of the working classes has lost her looks; but in her they were miraculously preserved. She was

tall, and carried herself loftily; her self-respect clothed her in a mantle of inapproachability. That she had Moorish blood in her was evident from the shape of her facial bones and the placing of her eyes. Within the first week she repulsed, successfully, the impudent advances of Pepe, and held to her refusal. Apparently Don José took no heed of her; they matched each other, those two, in their silence, pride, and dignity.

It once amused Pepe to say to his brother the priest :

‘Do you think Felipa is our father’s mistress?’

Miguel shrugged his shoulders as he replied :

‘If it is so, you may depend on it no one will ever know—to the grave, and beyond.’

Felipa cooked, she cleaned the rooms, she mended the personal and household linen, and, if she rendered herself in other ways indispensable to the comfort of Don José, such matters lay buried in the silence between them, and concerned no one save themselves. Only the curious, and those who lacked the taste to avoid prying into the private affairs of their host, whispered sometimes what would happen when Pepe, who was betrothed, brought his bride to the Casa del Matador.

The conduct of Don José, always, since his retirement, circumspect, became even more so with the betrothal of his eldest son. He himself had arranged the matter, on the lines of his own experience. A matador needs a rich wife, and, after much consideration and serious discussion with Don Antonio, an understanding had been reached with the grandmother of the young heiress upon whom, providentially, Pepe’s choice had fallen.

The settlement of Pepe’s future had brought the greatest satisfaction to Don José, whose whole life was centred in the youth whom people were beginning to call, for his father’s sake, Bailarinito. His pride built a dizzy edifice about Pepe; the others had the residue of it.

Three years had passed since, with Don Antonio’s help, he had solved the problem of Miguel; the boy was undergoing his training for the priesthood, and part of the bitterness that poisoned Don José’s fatherhood had drained itself away. None

save himself and Doña Laura had known that Miguel was the upas-tree whose shadow had lain across his life since the hour of the boy's birth; that the thought of Miguel, pinching his heart with clammy fingers, had, on at least one occasion, been responsible for that second of suspended awareness which, in nine cases out of ten, leads to fatal accidents in the bull-ring. Had he but known it, Miguel had had his plentiful revenge for the wrong done him by his father at birth. But, because to admit it lacerated his pride, Don José had concealed from the world the emotions which the sight of his second son aroused in him.

And Juan, the youngest, was still a schoolboy—gentle, mild, prone to strange melancholies and fierce unaccountable fits of passion for which his brothers teased him; bearing still the traces of a mysteriously delicate infancy, and disconcertingly indifferent to the sacred profession. He went to the bull-fights at his father's command, and, while waiting for the trumpet to blow, was capable of producing from his pocket a tattered copy of verses, and losing himself in the poetic griefs of his favourite author, Becquer. When Pepe's affairs were fairly settled, Don José promised himself that he would take Juan, whom he passionately loved, in hand. He had been left too much to Don Antonio; he had been chased into the background of the sparkling figure of Pepe, and had not had the same opportunities as his eldest brother. He responded with instinctive but languid grace to his father's casual instruction in the manipulation of the cape and muleta, but had apparently no enthusiasm for the profession. Tragic as this was, Don José was constrained by his affection to make the best of it; he loved Juan too much to coerce the boy towards a career for which he appeared to have no taste. No doubt two matador sons would be even better than one, but Don Antonio had intimated to him that Juan gave promise of being an intellectual, and Don José had sufficient respect for such to be mildly gratified by the prospect. But he certainly wished Juan to be manly as well, and, at the moment, he reminded his father rather of a shy girl.

Meanwhile, with an eye upon the old woman up at the



Alhambra, who had taken some talking into the acceptance of a bull-fighter for her grand-daughter's hand, Don José lived a life of the most scrupulous propriety.

Although his active participation in the life of the bull-ring was over, the rosy clouds of past glory hung about him. On his outgoings, there were many still to hail him as *El Balarín*; there were old aficionados of all classes who could recall his triumphs, and who greeted him with the most embarrassingly warm expressions of their fidelity. These were ready at any moment to run down present-day matadors in order to enhance his own glory. The only one they never ventured to run down was *Balarinito*. The more cunning of his admirers waxed hyperbolic over the achievements of Pepe, knowing that it was the surest way of coaxing the reluctant largesse out of Don José's pocket. The habit of flinging money about—an acquired, not a natural, one—had decreased of latter years, when money was no longer coming in as it did while he was still fighting; but Don José could rarely refrain from bestowing a few pesetas in acknowledgment of a more outrageous piece of flattery than usual. He was, as ever, at the mercy of those who fawned on him; wary and acute with those who did not pay the necessary tribute to his weakness.

Now and again distinguished guests, the reapings of his latter years, were entertained at the Casa del Matador; a famous writer, a doctor, some well-to-do friends from Madrid and Sevilla. Such guests ministered to his self-esteem, in reassuring him that, although lodged in a provincial backwater, he was not forgotten in the capitals. He was at home in their company, for he had not risen from the obscure classes from which frequently the great matadors are drawn; his forbears had been Andalusian land-owners, his mother had made an excellent second marriage into the family of a well-known cattle-breeder of Jerez de la Frontera. He came of well-reputed, dignified bourgeois stock, and had no social shortcomings to set him at a disadvantage in the society of his social superiors.

His position was an enviable one; financially and socially he was secure; yet Don José Díaz Marquez was not a happy

man. He missed—how bitterly none who professed to know him guessed—the glamour of the past. Sneering at the majority of present-day matadors, he envied them their places in the very centre of that sun to whose outer rays his own position had shifted. He was greedy for his son's fame: not, as he persuaded himself, on Pepe's account, but because it must enhance his own. He was jealous and captious about the degree of deference accorded to himself; his spirit was as sensitive as mercury to the hot or cold of public acclamation; he never overlooked or forgave a slight; was alert to the nuance of a greeting or a reception; had little use for bonhomie, unless it was subtly blended with veneration. Such a man cannot be happy, for he is for ever on his guard. He can never relax a stern watch, not merely upon himself, but on the reactions of others to his self-supplied stimulus. His temperament is a Nessus shirt that never ceases plaguing for a moment. And, above all, he is tormented by the ever-present need of concealment, because an essential part of that character which he presents to the world is imperturbability, the mark of a mind above petty irritation.

And, in a minor degree, he was plagued by his superstition, which sat for ever like a black imp on his shoulder, wearing sometimes a priest's gown and anon pranking itself in the vestments of an older thaumaturgy. He had never fully recovered from a shock he had at the birth of his second son, and all the cynicism and materialism of his nature had not served to deliver him from a bondage to which he had then committed himself. Religion, in the sense of spiritual awareness, Don José had none; he paid resentful deference to a Church which was as jealous in its exactions as he himself was jealous in his; he used it when it suited him; he believed in keeping on the right side of it for the sake of the material benefits which might accrue to him through it, and in moments of anxiety or fear he made a purely automatic appeal to its resources. His prayers were acts, less of religion than of superstition; he set a tremendous value upon the symbol represented by religious sculpture and painting, but was incapable of imagining the spirit behind them.

This superstition attached itself most closely to his relationship with his son, Balarinito. He had never seen Pepe fight, because he had a premonition that if he were to do so it would be only to see his son whirled like a dummy on the bull's horns. He desired passionately to see his son, to share actively in his honour, yet he knew that he must not allow himself the gratification of his desire in this respect. On the day of a fight, he remained at home, or in his hotel, consuming in nervous apprehension of he knew not what. He doubted neither the boy's skill nor his valour; to doubt either would have been to doubt himself, for, not only had he identified himself with his children, but he had mechanically taken to himself all that they showed signs of becoming; their laurels freshened the fading wreath about his own brow. Yet, sweating and praying and fingering his rosary, he knew no peace until he had assurance that all had gone well with Pepe in the ring.

Each day he traced a similar round of innocuous occupation: observing his duties to the Church; paying an occasional visit to Sevilla or Cordoba if there was a good fight to be seen; patronizing day after day the same wine-shops, the same cafés, having his chin shaved by the same barber, his shoes polished by the same bootblack. There is no city in Spain so timeless as Granada: none in which day slips so imperceptibly into day so that one loses all sense of the shape of a week, a month, a year.

Apart from the intense private excitement of his interest in Pepe's career, he lived a strange and outwardly limited life of a respected and reputable citizen, so at variance with his former existence that it was enough to stir the angels in heaven to laughter.

## Two

**T**O APPRECIATE to the full the latter-day existence of Don José Díaz Marquez, to realize his relationship with his sons, it is necessary to go back a few years to the original El Bailarín, whose name was on the lips of multitudes.

It is to be feared that Doña Laura did not gain a great deal by her marriage; unless, as one may hope, she reaped a certain lonely satisfaction from the reflected glory of her husband's name, during his long absences from her side. But it is likely she did not make much, even of that. Doña Laura was a virtuous, but stupid, woman; too much the product of her strict, conventional family and her severe upbringing to make a strong appeal to so volatile a temperament as her husband's. She was typical of her class in her indolence, her lack of interest in anything that took place outside the casa, and her complete ignorance of anything in connection with her husband's profession. She no more understood his pride in his work than she understood the religion whose formulæ she strictly observed. Her passions in life were drinking hot sweet chocolate and having her hair oiled by old Inéz, who came with her from her father's house on her marriage to El Bailarín. A plain, quiet girl, she was doomed, from the very beginning, to be married for her money. Her family and that of El Bailarín had an old-standing friendship; it was perhaps unfortunate for the señorita Laura Aguilar—as she then was—that this was so.

Gorged with celebrity, El Bailarín made little of the birth of his first son, Pepe; his conviction that he was supérman was

strengthened by the acclamation of the Madrid audiences—he was booked for a dozen ferias, women were mad over him.

He made complete surrender to the dangerous influences which surround the young and famous matador, trusting in his youth, his stamina, and his good luck to save him from the consequences of dissipation.

So far as his work was concerned the three elements served him well. The Press (suitably lubricated with Doña Laura's money) lauded him in terms of almost hysterical adulation; to choose a few of the less flowery of the epithets bestowed upon him by people who had no axes to grind, it would appear that he had a serious classic style, unimpeachable courage, and his cape-work improved at each performance. At his best, with a bull that ran to rule, his veronicas were very slow, very emotional; he was capable of providing a tremendous sensation; yet he avoided the pitfalls of cheap sensationalism and vulgarity by a seemingly miraculous instinct for what was becoming. He fought closer to the bull than any matador at that time in the ring, and his killing was a piece of pure artistry that brought tears of appreciation into the eyes of the aficionados.

Later on, of course, he became capricious: took an insolent pleasure in going into the ring and killing a few bulls with a deadly accuracy, without permitting one flash of genuine inspiration to disturb the fine classic level of his performance. It was his way of indicating that something—his manager, or the audience, or the bulls themselves—displeased him. His rumoured temperamentality became one of his chief commercial assets, which it would not have been, had he, on his 'off' days, descended to the banal. 'How's El Balarín this season?' 'Oh, he's killing like a book.' If one was El Balarín one could afford to have that kind of thing said of one's work; it heightened one's value, because even the most ignorant spectator knew that the presence of a rival, of a respected aficionado, or even an irresistible upwelling of professional pride, might account for a spectacle whose like was not to be seen in any other bull-ring in Spain. The spectator was willing to gamble the price of his barrera or

sobrepuerta—always raised for the appearances of the star—on the chance of it; if he lost he was at least sure of seeing a performance not to be equalled by any other matador.

But at the time of his marriage, and between the births of his sons, El Bailarín was still going 'all out' at every performance; his vanity would not allow him to reserve one trick that might serve to dazzle his audiences: and outside the ring he was indulging every folly and indiscretion which celebrity put in his way.

When he came home, to beget Miguel, with his mind on other matters, the traces of his dissipation were already upon him, and the child paid the price of it. Doña Laura had a fearful confinement, and, while her women attended to her, it was the priest, Don Antonio, who brought the infant downstairs and laid it in its father's arms. El Bailarín gave one glance at the pillow, upon which lay his newborn son; his face twisted itself into a mask of horror and disgust, and he nearly dropped the pillow. He looked up wildly, to find the accusatory eyes of the priest upon him. Hardly knowing what he said, El Bailarín muttered:

'Take it. It's horrible. It's not my child.'

For the first time the hard, slippery crust of self-love and vanity cracked, and through the crack slipped the icy blade of superstitious terror. El Bailarín crossed himself, muttered an *Ave Maria Purísima* . . . yet the feeling which gradually took possession of him, driving out his decenter emotion, was one of deep resentment against Doña Laura—that she should thus betray him with her body—and against the helpless babe who advertised his shame to the world.

'It may die,' he muttered shamefully.

'It will not die,' said the priest, shaking his head.

'How can you tell? How can such a thing have life? Even healthy infants die—smoulder out, like candle-wicks——'

'Our sins are not like candle-wicks,' cut in Don Antonio, not without unction, for he was aware that for once he had El Bailarín at his mercy. 'They are eternal fires, whose burning adds to our purgatory.'

'Father, I'll pay for a mass—for ten masses,' stammered El Balarín.

'Pay for a dozen if you will, my son; that is a part of your duty you have grievously neglected.'

'Perhaps the child will grow all right. There are pilgrimages—there is Lourdes,' stammered El Balarín confusedly.

'Why do you shut your eyes to the will of God, my son? Here is your sin made flesh. It may be God's will that you shall bear it with you all your days, as the holy saints themselves bore their earthly load of sin and pain, as a means of atonement whereby in the end you shall find grace.' Don Antonio was not a particularly spiritual man; he found a spice of unpriestly enjoyment in thus prolonging the torment of El Balarín, whose slippery ways of avoiding his dues to the Church had embittered their relationship in the past.

'But I——! Why should I be responsible for it? Have I not a son already who is as sound as a nut? And there is another—in Valladolid——' El Balarín stopped, biting his lip; it had suddenly recurred to his memory that the doctor to whom he had recently been obliged to go, in Madrid, was related to Don Antonio; there had been some gossip, some betrayal somewhere. He swung on his heel and strode out of the room.

He could not see that heaven had the right so to smite him for living a life which, after all, was common to his profession. Mood succeeded mood; a brief, half-insane compunction induced by the accusatory authority of the priest was followed by bitter incredulity. How could he be responsible for this outrage on flesh and blood? The fault lay with Doña Laura, who lay, a fortnight after the infant's birth, still too feeble to be reproached with her delinquency. Fortunately for her, he was away long enough on his next tour for the first edge of his resentment to have worn itself away. When he returned—after a period during which his public success had been greater and his private misdemeanours more flagrant than ever—he had evidently made up his mind to ignore the past. He was cold, but not actively cruel to her. 'There is a great doctor in Madrid; Miguel must go to

Madrid.' 'I am going to take Miguel to Lourdes.' He grunted his acquiescence to all suggestions, and turned a blind eye to the penances with which his wife had saddled herself. He knew that she wanted him to do the same, but he declined this part of his responsibilities.

With her third baby, born four years after the birth of Miguel, Doña Laura gave up the thankless task of living.

The news of her death reached El Bailarín at Ronda.

Death meant little to him. He had seen it too often at close quarters—had too often smelt it and felt it—to cherish more than a perfunctory respect for it. The best that could be said for it was that, occurring at the right moment, it furnished a bull-fighter with the finest exito of his career; it often grieved El Bailarín that he would not be able to enjoy this supreme moment when it came to him. 'Holy Virgin,' he prayed sometimes, 'let death come to me in Madrid, on a Sunday of the Resurrection!' This seemed to him the finest death a man could meet.

The death of Doña Laura did not distress him, for, at that time, the love of women was not in him. His egotism was so immense that he was incapable of tenderness. A woman represented to him a means whereby he could satisfy a certain need of his body—nothing more. Doña Laura's frail hold upon him consisted in her making no demands of any kind: and was strengthened by the fact that she represented his financial security. But the newborn child was another matter: it was a matter intimately bound up in El Bailarín's self-pride. A wave of uncontrollable anxiety passed over him.

The infant Juan had chosen, had he but known it, a fortunate moment for his birth: a moment when El Bailarín was a little less than satisfied with existence, with the drum-banging and parade and violence with which, deliberately, he had surrounded himself; a moment when he was tired of a passionate intrigue which had managed, for all his skill in such matters, to get out of hand; when he was ready for a diversion; ready, on sufficient compulsion, to take life seriously; and, most of all, ready for



a new emotion, this new and strangely agreeable emotion of paternity to which, up to the present moment, he had not seen fit to pay much attention.

Decency demanded that he should cancel his appearance in the bull-ring that afternoon and hasten home to his bereaved household; he had the best of reasons for wishing to do so. But the fight at Ronda was an important one. He thrust the telegram into his pocket. No one knew, save himself. He need not yield the laurels, for which he was still avid, to a sentimental consideration. If only there was some way of finding out about the child!

The woman who, during this business of the telegram, stood beside the door half cloaked in the heavy curtain which, on the entrance of the servant, she had dragged about her, watched El Balarín with eyes in which possessiveness, anger, and fear struggled for dominion, and demanded to be shown the paper he had thrust into his pocket.

'No,' said El Balarín curtly. He stared through her with a cold impersonality, seeing, not her, but the newborn son of whom he was the father.

'It's from some woman!' she challenged hysterically.

His face whitened with rage and dislike: partly that she should dare to intrude upon his private affairs, and partly because he resented the fact that before the arrival of the telegram she had been attempting to ruin his performance in the bull-ring by the demands she made upon him. He had known for some time that in continuing this affair he was imperilling his professional reputation; yet, for some reason, he lacked the force of will to terminate it. She had reached a pitch which all El Balarín's mistresses reached sooner or later, when he had finished victimizing them, inch by inch, with his remoteness, his contempt, and his insurfeitable pride. Her infatuation had crossed the borderline of sanity, and was like a dark, miasmic cloud that surrounded them both.

To begin with, he had found it reasonable; like the majority of matadors, he had found any woman's infatuation reasonable.

She learned, in time, that it was for her to sue, always, for favours; for him to grant them, in the degree he thought fit. She was an American, no longer young, but her handsomeness, at the beginning of their liaison, was spectacular; when El Bailarín had finished with her, she looked what she was—a raddled remnant, clinging desperately to the last experience life was likely to bring her. She loathed and adored him, and, knowing it, he despised her, and treated her, both publicly and in private, with an insolent brutality which would have driven a sane woman—which she was far from being—out of her mind.

While he dressed—she waiting upon him hand and foot, he silent, grandiose, and resentful, exacting from her the most menial duties because it pleased him to see her long body, that insulted him, in some of his moods, by its superior stature to his own, bent in the performance of a servant's task—he thought of the child. *Madre de Dios!* Why could they not have told me the child was sound? They might know I would think of nothing else. Blessed Mother of God, babbled El Bailarín inwardly. Let the new child be like Pepe! Not like the other! Not like the other, Mother of Jesus!

His wild glance across the room gave him his reflection from a distant mirror; suddenly it calmed him, as a familiar friend may bring reassurance by his mere presence.

He was seated half astride a square padded stool in the centre of the white marble floor, in shirt and breeches: fine frilled shirt of blanched linen, breeches that bore from waist to knee the heavy encrustations of gold thread and coloured sequins that would catch the sunlight as he crossed the ring. The back portion of the breeches was of heavy magenta-coloured woven silk: it moulded his buttocks as though he had been poured into it. His valet had attended to the more intimate portions of his toilet before the telegram came; it was not likely that he would entrust the delicate business of bandagings and paddings to the woman who knelt at his side, in an attitude of exaggerated humility, to stitch a tag of bullion that had become loosened at the knee. In a moment the barber would arrive, to oil his hair and arrange

the coleta. El Bailarín regarded his small, insolent reflection, with lips that writhed back from the gold-filled teeth, clamped on the butt of a yellow cheroot. A finely pointed, sharp-cut reflection, brilliant with its blacks and whites and slippery gold. He thought of his portrait which a wealthy aficionado had commissioned in Madrid; the artist had caught him just so, astride a stool, with arched torso, with left hand planted, elbow well thrust forward, upon the thigh. A fine fellow; fine matador; fine lover; fine father. As though a veil had been withdrawn from his brain, his doubts about his newborn son vanished.

His dark nepotic eye fell with momentary contempt to the woman whose attitude underlined her servility. He snapped his fingers as to a dog, and, disdaining to address her directly, pointed to the silken sash which his servant had laid in its folds upon the bed. Her big, stupid, startled eyes shot a glance at him, half of hatred, half of submission, as she stumbled to do his bidding.

The definite resolve was born in him, at that moment, to get rid of her. Not now, before the corrida; that would mean a scene, his own disturbance, a nervous upheaval at a moment when calm was imperative. She would not be likely to think of anything like that. With a mild sense of astonishment, El Bailarín found himself recalling that never, at any time, during their married life, had Doña Laura made him a scene, though heaven would witness she had her reasons! Well, it was not in her nature to do so. This *bicho*—he used a contemptuous term which is applied to bulls that give the matador trouble—had done nothing but treat him to scenes for the last two months. More than once he had gone into the ring with his teeth on edge with her outcries. One could do that once too often.

A passionate desire to hurt her took possession of him. He leaned across, lifted the receiver off the telephone, barked a peremptory request to be put through to the room of his manager, Ramirez, and waited.

At last Ramirez' voice reached him, high, shrill, and squeaky—a eunuch's voice.

'It is a good day for the bulls,' remarked El Balarín, removing the cheroot for purposes of distinct articulation. Ramirez agreed, sounding surprised, however, that El Balarín should ring him up to make so trivial an observation.

'I have some news for you. I am again the father of a son.' As he said the words, he was seized by a sudden inspiration. He was not given, save in the bull-ring, to inspiration. To-day, in the ring, he would dedicate his bull to his newborn son! That would be a magnificent gesture. He saw himself, drawn up opposite the President's box, hat in hand, mouthing his dedication: 'To my newborn son, inheritor of my name, and of the strength and skill of my matador's body, I dedicate this noble bull!' He heard the applause spreading from the callejon, across the barrera, up the gradas. Rapidly the news would travel from the shade into the sun—'El Balarín is dedicating his bull to his newborn son——' That would make a magnificent éxito!

As the congratulations of Ramirez came humming shrilly along the wire, El Balarín stood, smiling slightly, inclining his head at intervals, as though he received the homage of a multitude: biting his lip, lowering his eyelids to conceal his extreme gratification; now and again his right hand, with the cheroot in it, sketched an unfinished gesture upon the air, leaving a trail of blue that floated into a sunbeam and dissolved. He could never have too much of that kind of thing.

Standing there, he felt himself caught between two currents of intense emotion: one poured into his left ear, the other struck him somewhere in the region of the shoulder-blades.

'And Doña Laura? All is well with her?'

'Sufficiently,' snapped El Balarín, clipping the receiver back into its place. He stood for a moment, biting his thumbnail and scowling. It would be an inconvenient thing if the true state of affairs leaked out before the performance. Ramirez, the conventionalist, would not approve of his conduct, and it would put a pretty stiff strain upon his popularity with the public. Still, how should such a thing leak out? The telegram was safe in his pocket; he could pretend it had not arrived until after the per-

formance. . . . More thoughtfully than usual, El Bailarín opened a leather case, and selected from the multitude of trinkets it contained a small medal, set with gems, that he touched with his lips before hanging it round his neck on its thin gold chain. He kept this medal of Nuestra Señora de las Angustias for serious occasions.

The closed shutters held out the afternoon heat behind a screen of blistered wood; outside, the persianas, hung over the balcony rail, created a warmer, greener shade, into which El Bailarín stepped, for a glance into the street below. The sun, cutting in at an angle, smote him as with the flat of a sword. Hard blue sky above; shimmer of tawny heat below. The perfect day for the bull-fight. He caught sight of the vast shining top of the car which would take him to the Plaza de Toros; he a little regretted the modern innovation of the car; there was something superb in arriving at the ring behind a team of splendid mules, caparisoned in accordance with the standing of a famous matador! But Ramirez had insisted upon the car; a concession to the altered tastes of the public. It was a fine car, of an English make. To his satisfaction, a considerable crowd was already collected, waiting for his descent; aficionados of every class. The scene was set for another triumph.

El Bailarín heard a kind of slithering rush behind him; the woman was there, panting at him, with her mouth open. He smiled, for he could afford to be agreeable; his shaft had found its mark. He tapped her behind, casually, impertinently, as he leaned over to pick up his heavy matador's coat, with its padding, its clusters of tassels, from the back of a chair.

'It's time I had a new suit,' he remarked conversationally. 'After to-day I shall put this one away; it is very elegant, but it is not one of Romero's best. For fifteen thousand pesetas one might expect something a little more striking. However, it does. I have only had it on three times. I wear it to-day in honour of the birth of my son. After to-day it goes into the store-room, and he shall wear it for his first corrida!'

The smoothness of his voice was like oil. He had, at the

moment, no intention of being unpleasant. His mind was occupied with a single thing, and, characteristically, he spoke of it. His object in addressing her—if he had an object—was to indicate that his annoyance with her was over, for the present. And for once his cue was not accepted in the way he intended. For once El Balarín had a disagreeable shock. For, suddenly lifting her right arm, she struck him a swinging blow in the mouth.

‘You, with a son in the ring!’ she screamed. Her voice had the high, whistling note of complete abandonment to passion. ‘You can only get hunchbacks!’

El Balarín went greeny-white, as his teeth cut into his lower lip. It was his first intimation that she knew anything of Miguel. The next moment the fury of seeing his shirt and his scarlet tie defiled by a spatter of blood drove out all other emotions. Through the drumming in his ears he heard the woman’s sobbing, muffled in her hands, across which her eyes bulged at him in horror: and the incoherent ejaculations of the barber, who, at this inauspicious moment, had seen fit to come upon the scene. With every nerve in his body crinkling, El Balarín clapped his hands for his servant, who came running from the inner room. The two attendants elbowed the woman into the background, as with swift dexterous hands they prepared the matador for his ordeal. Their eyes met meaningly behind his back; he was stiff as iron. Someone came with coffee.

Standing in the callejon, while Pablito, the Mexican about whom so much fuss was beginning to be made, dealt with his first bull, he made a supreme effort to steady himself. No use going into the ring in a mood of savagery; rage increases a man’s danger, atrophies his brain processes, stiffens his muscles, and weights the dice unequally in favour of death.

His nerves were still jangling; in such a mood a man may be killed, or he may give a great performance. Desperately El Balarín pinned his mind on the scene before him: Pablito playing a great blond Muira beast, brave but foolish: one of its rushes carried it head over heels; the crowd roared with laughter at a spectacle which, to him, was as serious as a sacred rite.

What did they think they were watching?—los Chaplins? Pablito was showing off a lot, flicking the bull round him with short, snatching movements of the cloak that made El Bailarín curl his lip. He became gradually impatient to enter the ring, to display the resources of an art that made Pablito's look like the bunglings of a novice. He was a good killer, Pablito—that was about all. The crowd liked to see him go in, volapié, with a movement that seemed to convert his whole body into a sword; but the remainder of his performance was ignoble. In a couple of seasons he would be finished. El Bailarín thought of his own naturals. . . .

In this mood, when his moment came, El Bailarín took the sword and muleta from his sword-handler.

. . . And then, for no reason at all, with the bull chopped into position, himself profiled, ready to go in full weight over the horns for the killing, there came that fatal second of suspended awareness. As though two clammy fingers had given his heart a pinch, he heard the words—'You can only get hunchbacks!' The insane face of the woman intervened for an instant between him and the beast he was facing. In that instant the horn entered his groin, and El Bailarín, riding upon the lifted head of the bull, with his hands held high in the murderous sunlight, felt the chill shadow of an old sin, that came slipping down a vista of years, to catch him with his sun at noon.

Even as he fell, as the sand came rushing up towards his face, he was cursing his own foolishness. As the bull's breath roared at him from a black muzzle, and the mingled stench of animal sweat and blood beat into his face, he remembered the presence of the barber. The news would go round the town that he owed his mishap to a woman. *Jesú-Maria-José!*—if he came through this, he'd strengthen with a thousand candles his vow never to have anything to do with the wrong kind of women in the future! He was suffocating. Quick!—before his eyes betrayed his instinctive fear to the audience—to cover his face with his hands: the bull was boring, missing in its rage, the object it sought to destroy; it had him, now, embroque: a twist to left or right,

and—*poum!* in the lung, probably. There was just time, as the cuadrilla closed in with the capes, to sign the cross hastily on his breast: then the second shock took him; with a sense of surprise he saw the front of his shirt turn crimson.

Old Inéz, who held the child beside its dead mother's bed, had a tale that, at the moment when El Bailarín received his cornada, the infant Juan lifted up his voice in a long, bitter cry: so dolorous, so unlike the usual cry of infants that all who heard it crossed themselves in fear. Unlikely as was this story, at least in its implied connection between young Juan's howl and his father's misfortune, it was always held by Don José as a proof of the mystical understanding between himself and the child he had never seen.

Tears of relief poured down his cheeks when, brought back to Granada for his long convalescence, they showed him his youngest son, frail as wax, but, praise to all the saints, perfect in body as a little waxen image of Jesus himself. In his excessive relief, El Bailarín not only ordered a thanksgiving mass, he bought a very considerable jewel for Nuestra Señora de las Angustias. He could afford to do it; his wife had left him the whole of her fortune.

At first he resented the coddlings and warnings of Inéz; he would have had the infant out of its cradle, to roll upon his bed and cuff it about as a cat cuffs its kittens. But gradually the excessive fragility of the minute silent creature was borne in upon him. The thing was so patient, so uncomplaining, lying there hour after hour, uttering no sound, giving no signs of life save in its dark eyes, whose premature intelligence looked out upon the world through a thin haze of milky blue. It won respect, even of its father. El Bailarín was awed by it. It had never cried, apparently, since that one dolorous note on the day he was gored, at Ronda. He bellowed, once, at Pepe, for swaggering and roaring too close to the cradle; Pepe, scared stiff by so unwonted a demonstration from his indulgent father, fled like a rabbit; but the babe turned for an instant its illimitable look in the direction



of the shout, and El Bailarín crossed himself in terror lest he should have harmed it.

At the beginning of the next season Ramirez was fortunate in arranging an excellent come-back for El Bailarín, in Madrid: his return to public life was marked by a reception sufficiently gratifying to satisfy the most exacting of his admirers.

It was at this point that José Díaz Marquez passed into the second and most momentous phase of his career.

Inevitably, as behoved a young, dashing, and popular matador, he had belonged to a racketeering crowd. The man who returned to the bull-ring in 1921 was an altered being. In a sense, El Bailarín had aged. Not physically; he was now one of the three highest paid matadors in the profession. He never actually touched Belmonte's forty-five thousand peseta mark, but twenty thousand was the very lowest figure at which he would go into the ring. He was without equal under his favourite conditions. But the exaggerated arrogance, the exhibitionism, the peacockry of his character had given place to something deeper, graver, and more formidable. His accident at Ronda, and its cause, known only to a few beside himself, had given him a fright.

In making a circus figure of himself, El Bailarín had been shouting in his own ear the legend of his own greatness. There followed the period when it was no longer necessary to do so. The fact was self-evident; he accepted it, as multitudes had already accepted it, and it ceased to trouble him.

Surfeited with the old kind, his mind had glimpsed a new sort of grandeur. The new El Bailarin was much less approachable than the former one, and less sympathetic to the riff-raff. It was amusing to see his erstwhile boon companions dropping like-gorged leeches from a surface that no longer presented a hold to their clutches. The new El Bailarín was smooth; smooth as polished steel—and as hard. More than ever rapacious, and unscrupulous, to a point, in his manner of obtaining money. The banished playfellows got into corners and sneered at his attitude; the whisper went round that El Bailarín was playing for high society, because on one or two occasions he was seen

in the company of certain persons who would hardly have cultivated his society in previous years. He was made honorary member of select clubs, in Madrid and Sevilla; his closest friends were distinguished members of professions other than his own, and he was reputed to have the entrée into even more aristocratic circles. He had become, suddenly, and, as far as *los amigos* went, disconcertingly, precisely what he remained twenty years later: a grave and reverend señor of middle-class conventions and prejudices.

His *cuadrilla* naturally felt the change the most; leading gay lives themselves, it was not agreeable to have *El Bailarín* suddenly turning respectable on their hands. Apprehensive of interference, they were prepared to resent any rash criticism he might indulge upon their own conduct. But some sense of the appropriate luckily prevented *El Bailarín* from interfering, so long as they continued to perform their duties creditably. He had always, like all first-class matadors, preserved a certain distance between himself and the *cuadrilla*; he now increased that gulf until it was practically impossible to see across it. The *cuadrilla* pulled faces, but saw no point in risking their salaries.

The two main directive motives of *El Bailarín's* life had now become the preservation of his physical fitness—and hence of his position at the head of his profession—and the care of his three motherless sons, whom he kept at Granada under the care of old *Inéz*. He was nearly as proud of being the father of Pepe and Juan as he was of being a first-class matador. He had schooled himself to endure the presence of Miguel; this seemed part of an atonement which had begun in the bull-ring at Ronda; he wondered how many times he would be called upon to pay the penalty before he accomplished his redemption. The result of this thought, which lingered always upon the edge of his consciousness, lent his performances a new tragic quality that greatly enhanced his reputation with the intellectuals.

Let it not be supposed that the new *El Bailarín* was an anchorite. Women there had always been, and always would be. But the chance admirers of many nationalities, who had found

it easy in the old days to crash El Balarín's privacy, no longer found his doors open. He was as closely guarded as a reigning prince; acknowledged neither gifts nor *billets-doux*; his cloak was deposited before no flamboyant señorita, but in front of some grave and noble patron of the bull-ring.

Amours he indulged in plenty, but no longer flaunted them. Partly, no doubt, on account of the fact that they no longer concerned the class of women who would countenance such publicity, he conducted them discreetly, upon a strict basis of convention. No more staying in fashionable hotels with a beautiful or garish charmer, whose *toilettes* advertised his successes. The Church and cock-fighting got a good deal of the money he had formerly frittered in less innocuous ways. He returned constantly to Granada—where the boys were growing up under the care of Inéz and Don Antonio—to cuff Pepe, to be awkwardly kind to Miguel, and to fondle and spoil Juan: and in 1924 he received the cornada which put a premature and definite end to his career. The fact that Pepe was already dedicated to the ring helped a little to blunt the edge of his agony.

## Three

**A**S FAR as her years went, Doña Mercédes Borrás was one of the oldest inhabitants of Granada, and flouted public opinion by living in a style oddly irreconcilable with the reports of her wealth. She occupied one of the smallest and shabbiest villas on the Alhambra Hill; Carmen de los Arrayánes, it was called—the garden of the myrtles. Its origins lost in antiquity, it was represented, in the days of Doña Mercédes, by a small, tottering pile of pink masonry, heaped on a hillside so steep that, pull a stone away from the foundations, and you would have had the whole thing toppling down into the valley in a cloud of dust.

Like its owner, the Carmen de los Arrayánes was in the last stages of decay, for Doña Mercédes would not spend a centimo upon it. She cared nothing for the dangers, to herself or to others, of rotting beams, balconies that hung by an inch of crumbling plaster, broken flooring. She often said that she wished the house to die with herself—which it showed every prospect of doing; that it was evil; that a cursed spirit inhabited it. She was a miserable and false old woman, who lived in a state of continual war with her neighbours; she had almost ceased to go out of doors, because the rude small boys shouted after her shuffling figure, and threw handfuls of pebbles into her shabby trailing skirts.

No one knew how the stories of her wealth started; but Granada as a whole had accepted them as gospel truth. The most sober and literal-minded citizens would wag their heads

wisely at the mention of her name; and the majority, who were neither sober nor literal-minded, never wearied of adding to the fairy-tale of the immense wealth which was said to be accumulating to her account in the Urquijo. She was very old; she had become silly; she had forgotten about it; or she was a miser. She had come to the Carmen de los Arrayanes with her granddaughter, from Madrid, some fifteen years back, and she had never parted with a duro, save to an accompaniment of senile whimpering, of protestations that she was ruined; yet the girl was brought up like a noblewoman, had her governess, and afterwards her dueña, and was kept, for the most part, secret, like an enchanted princess in a tower. The household itself was irregular, but never consisted of less than three servants, and neither the señora nor her grand-daughter ever laid a finger to any kind of house-work. Only wealthy people would live in such a fashion!

The old house had, upon its lower floors, an air of impenetrable gloom and melancholy; the windows were shrouded with the wistaria which formed a tangle no longer to be resolved by any mortal weapon. The dry, stiff branches, dead or dying, wove their meshwork across the window-panes, concealing from the occupants of the rooms the upper, living portion, with its drooping lilac clusters. Floors, walls, and ceilings had slipped askew, probably as much from the result of age as of the occasional earthquakes, which, usually during the latter days of August, added their quota to the house's disruption. The furniture stood at impossible angles, or rocked away from its background. In the crimson curtains, which bore a century of grime, were large rents, which, from time to time, had been cobbled with vari-coloured wools, and had broken away again. The proportions of the long dining-room were reduced by the massive archway with pillars which formed an alcove of one end. Through it one entered a baroque little *salon*, plastered with mock-Arabic tiles, crowded with cheerless furniture. Here Doña Mercédes received her guests.

Don José was taken aback by the aspect of this room, when

he came to request the hand of the old lady's grand-daughter for his son, Pepe. Surely such dirt, such squalor, such disorder could only be accounted for by poverty? He began to think better of his mission, to consider how he could account for his visit without committing himself too far.

'Good day, Señora Doña Mercedes Borrás,' said Don José formally. 'Although we have not met before, we do not, I hope, meet as strangers; we are known to one another, at least so far as our names and reputations are concerned, and I hope you will not think that I am taking a liberty in calling upon you to enquire after your health.'

Something in the blank stare of her eye told him that she was deaf, and his speech increased in loudness towards its conclusion until he was almost shouting. He stopped, rather suddenly, embarrassed by the noise he was making, and wiped his brow with his folded handkerchief. There followed one of those stupid silences that break the back of a conversation when one of the parties is hard of hearing, and unwilling to acknowledge the weakness. Doña Mercedes sat back in her chair, holding its arms, and still staring blankly at Don José. She had a long, pointed, and heavily bearded chin; her underlip fell away from ill-fitting dentures, but her eye still held the rich, brown colouring of youth; it was a surprisingly living eye, for all its blankness, in that dead face. When she spoke, her voice, to Don José, was equally surprising; it was uncertain, indistinct, as though, at some recent period Doña Mercedes had suffered a stroke, but its tone was as deep as a man's.

'And what do you say? How is it we don't meet as strangers?' she mumbled.

'Because we are probably the two most famous people in Granada,' said Don José handsomely. 'And I have called to congratulate you because I hear in the town that it is your saint-day; I called to wish you a hundred more years of health and prosperity such as you are clearly enjoying.'

'Who told you it was my saint-day? You're wrong, it is not my saint-day.'

'But how unfortunate!' exclaimed Don José, hypocritically striking his forehead a blow. 'People should be punished for giving misinformation.'

'The mistake is not of great importance, Señor Don José Díaz Marquez,' she conceded, slurring the words so that they were almost indistinguishable. 'Now, let me see; I begin to remember. You married an Aguilar. Which was it now?—Carlotta?—no, that one was the one that went into the convent. Lucia, was it? No, Laura. Of course it was Laura; for the other two died before her, and she got all the money.'

This unexpected knowledge of his affairs took Don José aback. It also revealed to him that Doña Mercedes was not so feeble-minded as she appeared.

'You are very well informed, señora. Perhaps your family was acquainted with the Aguilars?'

'Yes—I mean, no. Not the Aguilars here; the Madrid family. I knew them very well. They were intimate with my family.'

Don José pricked his ears; for the Madrid Aguilars were known to his wife's branch of the family as 'the grand Aguilars'. So grand were they that when Don José had called upon them in Madrid he was told that the family was not at home. The Madrid Aguilars had nothing to say to a connection by marriage who happened to be a matador! Although the snub had rankled, it had not prevented El Bailarín boasting about his high-class connections, one of whom actually held some position about the Court. If Doña Mercedes was an intimate friend of the Madrid Aguilars, two things followed as the night the day: that she herself was well connected, and that she had heard the marriage of Laura Aguilar of Granada discussed in no promising terms.

'So you see I know all about Laura Aguilar who married a matador. Is that you? Is that what you said?'

'I was in the profession when I married Laura Aguilar,' said Don José very stiffly.

'And you are living in Granada? Where did you say you live?'

Don José, who was already getting tired of this senile ques-

tioning, and had given up the idea of broaching the subject which had brought him to the house, did not care to say that he lived in La Manigua, as the old woman's ignorance was evidently not to be relied upon, so he replied that he had inherited from his wife some property in the town, which included the house in which he lived with his sons.

'With your what? With your sons? So you have sons, Don José. I had not heard about them.'

'My eldest son,' shouted Don José, unable, as usual, to resist an opportunity of boasting about Pepe, 'is a matador.' He said it as one might say, 'My son is a reigning prince'; or, 'My son is a cardinal.' The old woman blinked, as though this conveyed little to her, but she began to hold her head on one side, and to use her black fan coquettishly, while observing Don José through eyes which were a little less blank than before.

There was another long pause; a bluebottle buzzed against the window-pane, and a dog, concealed under Doña Mercedes' chair, set up a counter-noise by scratching his harsh, scaly skin.

'Be quiet, Chico.—I was once at a bull-fight,' remarked Doña Mercedes, in an almost normal conversational tone.

He inclined his head grandly; he took it for granted.

'I was at Talavera, on the afternoon of May 16th, in the year 1920,' she said, with an astonishing lucidity.

Now, there is not a matador of Don José's period to whom this combination of date and place does not carry something of a religious significance; for it was upon that day, and in that place, that Joselito, canonized in the annals of the bull-fight, met his death. Don José, briefly making an act of intercession for the soul of his friend, felt, as it were, a doorway open between himself and Doña Mercedes, and received at the same time the slightly confusing impression that she had been deliberately leading him astray with her assumption of shattered wits.

'I was also in a box on another occasion,' she said, nodding her head once more, whether at her thoughts or on account of the palsy that intermittently took her, he could not be certain. 'That was in Ronda, in the same year, upon the twelfth day of June—'



The door closed; another sensation rushed upon Don José—of something that descended out of space, with defeat in its dark wings.

‘I was with Encarnación Aguilar; she pointed you out to me—the matador who had married her cousin. Ay-ay! I remember she was very much ashamed of it! I remember noticing you because your face was very white and you walked with a very peculiar movement.’

‘It was a day of great importance to me, señora; I had just become the father of a son.’

‘And your wife was dead,’ prompted Doña Mercedes.

Now how did she know that?

‘I did not know that at the time,’ he lied angrily. She looked at him with an expression of sly incredulity.

‘Ay-ay! I was a little younger then, you know! I dare say you are not surprised to hear that when I was a young girl I fell in love with a matador?’

Don José was not surprised; indeed, he took it for granted. At some period or other of her life every woman in Spain fell in love with a matador, for it is surely part of a matador’s profession to make women fall in love with him. But he made some slight insincere movement of deprecation, which drew a roguish fan-tap from the old lady.

‘Oh, you matadors!’ To his horror the saliva ran over the corner of her lip and dribbled among the hairs of her chin. ‘It is well known how you trifle with the innocent affections of young girls!’

‘Pardon me, señora,’ said Don José, with the utmost earnestness; at the same time laying his hand upon his heart. ‘I swear to you upon the Lord Jesus Christ that I have never had anything to do with a young and innocent girl in my life. They were all of them women of experience.’

‘What? No glances? No whispers when you passed a pretty girl on the street? You expect me to believe that?’ She cackled, agitating her fan rapidly, as if the images recorded by her memory roused also the echoes of long dead emotions in her shrivelled

bosom. 'I don't forget how he looked at me with his beautiful dark eyes—my matador I was so fond of. We never so much as spoke to one another—Dios, but I was strictly brought up!—I never even looked at him; but every morning when I went to confession with my maid he followed me. Now I dare say you have done just the same sort of thing in your time?' Two patches of crimson smouldered on her cheek-bones; the fan shook with a feverish excitement.

Don José put his head on one side and on the other, pursing his lips; it had not, in his case, he intimated, stopped at following a girl to confession.

'I could have run a knife into the girls he sent his cloak to! What was his name? Ay-ay! I can't even remember his name,' she whimpered.

'It may have been Perrito de Bilbao,' said Don José, concealing a yawn. 'He was famous for the passions he inspired among the ladies.'

'Perhaps it was. Though the name sounds different . . . *Ave Maria Purísima!* How passionately in love I was. And it all came to me that Sunday at Ronda, when I saw you tip-toeing your way towards the bull, in your magenta suit!'

A puerile gratification, that she should remember what he was wearing, set up a crepitation under Don José's breast-bone.

'I saw the bull hit him just as it hit you. It must be very disagreeable when the bull hits you, señor.'

'It is not comfortable,' admitted Don José.

'That was sixty years ago. You should have seen me in those days—in a crimson Manila shawl, with a white camellia in front of my comb—on the day he was killed at San Sebastian. No, that was later. I was married by that time, and I remember biting my lip so the blood ran down my chin, that I should not betray my emotion to my husband, who was sitting beside me.'

How long was she going to ramble on about her past? he wondered. And how much had he to gain by staying? It would seem impossible to get any reassurance by prolonging the con-

versation. Pepe must look elsewhere for a novia; this business was altogether too risky, too founded on fairy-tale, to engage the attention of a young man who seriously needed money.

'I remember I thought what an odd coincidence it was that I should happen to be wearing a white camellia at Ronda——'

'*Madre de Dios!*' muttered Don José, looking instinctively for the abhorred flower.

'Ha-ha! Next time I wear a white camellia it will be in my coffin, señor! . . . And that was the last fight I ever saw. What a day it was! Hot like a furnace, and the bulls running like railway trains. And there were you, handsome as an archangel—you need not change colour for an old woman's flattery!—upon the tips of your toes, with such a pretty curve to your wrist! I've heard that matadors have wrists of steel; is that true?'

'You may judge for yourself, señora,' responded Don José, partly because he was unable to resist flattery, and partly because he could not rid himself of the impression that beneath the old woman's inconsequent chatter ran a thread of purpose. He managed not to shudder as her forefinger, with its long pointed nail, ran drily over the veins of his wrist.

'Ee-ee! To think I am touching a matador!'

'May it bring you good fortune,' said Don José formally, as he shook down his cuff and adjusted the platinum links, which he hoped she had observed.

'And you? What about you? Have you good fortune to spare? You haven't told me what went wrong on that Sunday at Ronda.'

How diabolically she harped on this tender cord!

'The sun was in my eyes.'

'Your eyes—your eyes . . .' The animation died out of her suddenly; she seemed to collapse like a pricked balloon; her cheeks and her neck reminded Don José of an empty yellow bladder. He loathed the signs of old age in women; they awoke his cruelty, his mockery which, for decency's sake, he had to control. But they were there, in his heart, and also the knowledge of why he hated and mocked: because old age, with its decay, its horrible indignity of helplessness, frightened him.

He rose to his feet, prepared to make his adieux—and, in due time, his explanations to Pepe. She came doddering into life again, like a mechanized doll, wagging her head and her hands at him.

‘But you will stay to take a little chocolate?—a few sweet cakes? Since we have been so long in making each other’s acquaintance, we might as well—as well . . . what was I going to say? . . .’

What was it? All the suspicion, all the wariness in Don José’s nature sprang swiftly to attention, as he watched with narrowed eyes the grotesque pantomime of hospitality which Doña Mercedes was making, her terrible smiles which were meant to captivate him, as, no doubt, she had captivated men in the days of the red Manila shawl and white camellia. In all the feebleness of her mind and body he scented danger, as surely as if a hand with a dagger in it had suddenly revealed itself in the parting of the ragged curtains.

‘Who were the people—friends of mine—whom you said you knew?’ she said, as he settled again, warily, into his chair. She had evidently forgotten about the chocolate and the cakes, for she had made no movement to call a servant.

‘The Aguilers—my wife’s relations,’ shouted Don José.

‘Dear me, yes. And how is your wife? And how does she like your going to call upon ladies without saying anything to her about it?’ sniggered Doña Mercedes.

The room smelt; Don José, who was personally fastidious, attributed it to the hidden animal which continued to scratch under its mistress’s chair. It was an old, sick smell; he began to have a very lively desire to get out of it.

‘Or perhaps you do not choose to worry her very much just as present? She is not very well, perhaps? No doubt she has enough to see after with the children—how many? And all little matadors, I know!’

‘I have three sons,’ said Don José, restraining himself. ‘One is already a matador. The second is dedicated to the priesthood, and the youngest—who was born on the Sunday of which you have so good a memory, señora—is just fifteen years of age, and lives at home with me.’

'I begin to think you are very interesting,' said Doña Mercédes, after another lengthy pause. 'I have never heard of a matador's son becoming a priest. That will certainly interest my grand-daughter. More, I am afraid, than the affairs of the other—the one who is going to be a matador.'

'But surely the señorita has been to a bull-fight?' said Don José, with a smoothness that belied his thoughts. The ice was broken!—and by the old woman, not by himself. They had arrived at the mention of the grand-daughter.

'What do you say?—To a bull-fight? Never! Never! I got her a governess—a woman who unfortunately was very much against the—against the what do you call it?—bull-fight. Very aristocratic—her cousin was a governess to the Infantas. You see the connection of ideas?'

'But you yourself, señora, as an aficionada—I should have thought you——'

'My days for going to the bull-fights are over. It is too long to sit still—and—excuse me—the bulls are not what they used to be. Valour is valour, whether of the old school or the new. But when one is used to a beast of the old Muira breed——'

Don José nodded gravely.

'It is a great pity, señora, that your grand-daughter is not as enthusiastic as you are yourself over the bull-fight.'

She wagged her head once more, and reverted to senility; her voice whined like a beggar's as she suggested, 'Perhaps the señor has brought with him a little gift?—A few sweets?—Some flowers?'

Don José cursed himself for the omission, an almost indispensable formality of calling upon an elderly lady. He had not, in fact, thought of Doña Mercédes as a lady; the most he had hoped of her was a successful business acquaintanceship—which, as it turned out, seemed little likely to be established. That there was nothing to be gained by carrying the matter further he was almost positive; almost, but not quite. He felt a little like a general who, having planned to take a fortress, is not sure that the strategic position is worthy of his ammunition.

'I had not presumed upon my ignorance of the señora's tastes——' he blustered.

'That was not very polite of you,' she whimpered. 'One does not sue for favours with empty hands!'

'Pardon—I did not catch what you said,' stammered Don José.

'Because, of course, you have come to ask the hand of my grand-daughter for one of your sons.' While Don José sat speechless, her face brightened. 'It is possible the señor has some cigars in his pocket?'

'Yes, indeed!' exclaimed Don José, instantly producing his cigar-case of Cordoban leather, and forgetting to hope that she would notice the gold mounting and elaborate monogram that distinguished this gift from an aficionado. 'You will honour me by accepting one.'

'I have always enjoyed a good cigar,' she mumbled, as he applied a match to the end of the long yellow Havana that she clutched in her teeth. 'It was in Cuba I learnt to smoke them, when my husband took me there.' She puffed the smoke out voluptuously, fanning it away from her eyes as the draught from the door carried it across them. Don José took it for granted that he was at liberty to follow her example. Apparently the cigar stimulated her brain-power, for it was almost with animation that she remarked presently:

'Now, it can't be the priest, and it can't be the boy, so it must be the matador. My grand-daughter is only interested in religion. She is a very pious girl. I do not think she would be at all likely to take a serious interest in a matador.'

This was going too fast, he thought; seeing out of the corner of his eye a cobweb which, looped into the cornice, looked as though it had not been disturbed in the last twenty years. Below it hung another, fresher and more frail; he could dimly make out its dark occupant, like a currant in grey paste. . . . He disliked cobwebs. The chair on which he sat had a rickety leg; the tapestry on the arms was worn to a neutral patch of canvas with ravelled edges. What kind of a girl was it who sat contented in a room of this kind, and made no attempt to improve its condi-

tion? And what servants carried slovenliness to such a pitch that they did not shake a carpet or lift a cushion? And was it religion or an aristocratic rearing that prevented the grand-daughter from putting a few stitches into the ragged fringe of a table-cloth of crimson brocade?

He hardly troubled to follow the divagations of the aged mind as it went wandering on and on; now looping itself round some event of fifty years ago, confusing the past with the present; but he watched her out of the corner of an eye that had in it the growing certainty that all this chitter, this confusion, was beautifully acted for his benefit, and that behind it existed the direction of a mind as definite as his own. So skilfully she seemed to drop scraps of information about herself, her grand-daughter, in among the nonsense, as one might carelessly fling away valuables among a tray of ashes. Her body was hunched in the chair, her fan kept up a nervous beat in the air, and she blew gusts of smoke into the already smoke-dimmed little room.

'My grand-daughter's upbringing has been very refined. . . . She has been guarded like a precious jewel. . . . There is not one of the virtues which she does not possess. . . .'

There came a pause; she sighed.

'What shall become of such a treasure when I am gone? Ay-ay! If one could live for ever! The precious charge left me by her father, my dead son . . .'

Don José sat like a stone; he was not rising to this bait. It became clear to him that the old woman was anxious to marry off her grand-daughter.

'Is your son doing well in his profession?'

Don José cleared his throat, looked for a place to spit, and, seeing none, discreetly swallowed his saliva.

'Let me be frank, señora.' There was an echo of mockery in the words; it was the last thing that he was capable of being. 'There is only one thing which stops him from leaping to the head of his profession. That is, he has not the means, nor can I furnish him with them, to maintain the proper costs of his career.'

'I have always heard that matadors are very extravagant.'

'It is not a cheap profession,' acknowledged Don José, and looked at her slyly before continuing. 'And there are many temptations. I need not say anything about them.'

'Go on; I should like to hear about the temptations,' giggled Doña Mercedes. He was taken aback, for, in dealing with virtuous women, his conversation was always very circumspect.

'Go on,' she snapped. 'Do you take me for a virgin?—It is very amusing to hear about the sins one is too old to commit.' Her body shook with her chucklings; she rolled about in her chair.

'Pepe is a good boy!' burst out Don José; he was not falling into this trap!

'Good boy—bad matador!' she retorted; there was no doubt about it, her brain was fresh enough at the present moment.

'He is like other boys. When one is young the world is a great playground. But he is a good boy; he only requires a woman to give him seriousness.'

'They say that Belmonte got forty-five thousand pesetas every time he went into the ring,' she interrupted; the avaricious glint in her eyes matched Don José's.

'Money makes money,' answered the latter sententiously.

'I dare say,' she muttered, with a gesture that showed the subject had ceased to interest her. With an effort she thrust herself up out of her chair; the dog crawled from beneath it to stand beside her; he looked as old as his mistress, with whitened muzzle and trembling flanks; there was a patch of bare skin on his back, and a revolting canker on one of his ears. 'Let us go and sit on the terrace, under the orange-trees; our oranges did very well this year; how did yours do?'

'I have no garden, señora; my house is in the town.'

'You must see my garden; permit me to show you our magnificent garden, señor! It is a veritable paradise—such a profusion of flowers! Such noble trees! A pleasure-garden with fountains—an arbour for lovers!'

Don José followed her quavering figure through an open door.



There were some shabby garden-seats, a round wooden table with a slatted top. Lizards ran about the parapet, watched without enthusiasm by a large white cat. The paradise of Doña Mercedes' grandiloquent description resolved itself into a matted thicket of myrtle and ancient orange-trees, beneath which small broken paths of uneven cobbles meandered into conjecturable distance. A mournful trickle of water issued from a slimy stone basin and dripped into a circular tank where, apparently, the servants had been washing clothes. There were a few stunted and blossomless rose-bushes, some neglected pots of plants.

'Is this not like a vision of paradise? The orange-trees—how they are bent with their load of fruit: every fruit like a goblet of wine! And later, the pomegranates—the figs! Further along, out of sight, there is a flight of marble steps; one day I shall take you down them: to-day, excuse me, I am not equal to it. The lawns! The lakes! You will not believe until you have seen them!' She was clutching his arm, peering up closely into his face, as though she sought to impose her madness upon his sanity. Don José felt a *frisson* of complete horror. Then her eyes went blank; she looked round blinkingly, as though she had come out of a dream, let go of his arm, and seated herself. For a few moments she was quite silent; an expression of wonder and hurt surprise was on her face, as though she found it impossible to reconcile her present surroundings with the magnificent picture in her brain. A simple smile spread itself across her features.

'I am very fond of sitting here at this time of the day. Everything is warm, as though there had been a fire. The sun is truly God! Have you ever felt that? . . . Sometimes my granddaughter reads to me—but not often. Ay-ay! It is not easy to find suitable literature for a young girl to read aloud; and her confessor, Don Felipe, is very strict with her. Stricter than he need be, to my way of thinking. "Look here," I say to him sometimes, "with a girl as innocent as that it does not matter what she reads! The words are just words to her, and if she asks questions I can soon tell her some fairy-tale that will settle the matter." But no; she'd read nothing but lives of the saints

if he had his way; and I ask you, does a woman of my age want to listen to the lives of the saints?’

‘I thank you very much for your hospitality, Señora Doña Mercedes,’ said Don José, rising. ‘I must now bid you good day.’

‘Now, now! You surely do not wish to go without seeing this pearl of my house; this princess of my beautiful garden! What would the son who is a matador say to that? And you have not yet told me where he saw her—where they fell in love with one another! Not one word has she said to me—can you believe it? That an angel should be so sly!’

Don José instantly became very sly and slippery; he hunched his shoulders, spread out his hands.

‘I know very little, señora, beyond the fact that a young man’s passion is very easily inflamed when he sees a beautiful girl in church.’

‘In church! There is a special blessing upon such encounters, señor.’ She sniggered a little. ‘And did it stop at that?’

‘Ask me no more, señora. I will be honest with you. I have come to beg a favour from you.’

‘I knew it!’ She was quite radiant with triumph.

‘I have come to beg you to keep the señorita your granddaughter out of my son’s way. Lock her up! Put bolts and bars upon her! Keep her away from the reja! For the love of all the blessed saints, conceal her, as one conceals a holy relic, so long as my son Pepe is in Granada!’

‘Why do you ask so extraordinary a thing, Señor Don José?’ enquired the old woman, plucking her skirts with a nervous hand.

‘Why? Because such a passion is bound to carry misfortune with it; because you know yourself what happens too often when a young man is ardently in love with a girl whom he can neither marry nor make his mistress. For the love of God, señora, I do not want a tragedy in my house! My son Pepe is the treasure of my life, as your grand-daughter is the treasure of yours. And there can be no question of anything between them.’

‘No, no; that is true. It would not do for my grand-daughter to marry—you will excuse me—a matador!’

'Nor can my son marry anyone but an heiress! For the sake of his profession. You understand? Money must be the first consideration. We appreciate each other's points of view, señora: so you will relieve my anxiety? You will help me to put an end to this miserable situation?'

She set her head on one side.

'And before you go, you had better have a chance of judging for yourself whether your son has good taste or not,' she said, and, to Don José's surprise, spoke sharply to the dog slumbering and shivering at her feet. It lifted its purblind head and barked twice; the noise was thin and hoarse; it had an affinity with the crumbling walls, with the age-old myrtles, and all the creeping antiquity which, even in the broad light of day, put a spell upon the place; it was the ghost of a bark, that hardly disturbed the veil of silence which the shadows of the leaves drew between this spot and the commonplace life on the other side of the wall. Yet it was heard. It stood, apparently, for a summons. For as Don José sat with his eyes expectantly upon the face of the dog's mistress, the myrtles themselves parted, and detaching itself like a hamadryad from their mottled green, and grey, appeared the figure of a girl, in answer to the call.

'As obedient as a little lamb,' mumbled Doña Mercédes. 'Did I not tell you she has all the virtues?'

Smooth indigo hair, from which the mantilla had slipped upon her shoulders, framed a small oval face, whose frosted pallor was emphasized by lips folded upon one another like twin petals of a crimson rose. Her brows formed thin sable arcs above the eyes, in which all that was secret and special in this remote girl was concentrated; they were like silver coins slipped under the half moons of her heavy lids. They rested, with a curious hard purity, like the ore they resembled, upon Don José, whose inner man was stirred by a singular and undefinable sensation.

Her black dress, of thin material, cut with a nun-like austerity, defined her small virginal breasts, which stirred with her breathing, and moulded the narrow, childish hips that bespoke her immaturity. For her age—seventeen—Pilar was almost fantastic-

ally immature in build, and this immaturity, in a land where girls ripen early, seemed to Don José, seeing her for the first time close at hand, to set her in a strange, supernatural category, apart from all the women he had ever known. She had the slow, undulating walk which, although supposed to be the common property of Spanish women, in reality belongs but to a few; but the movement, instead of being seductive, invested her with a remoteness of her own, a *noli me tangere*, rather than an invitation. Don José was attracted, repelled, scared, and charmed, in successive waves of feeling, as he rose and made a formal bow, which she may have acknowledged above his head.

'Go, go!' croaked Doña Mercedes, clapping her hands as she might have clapped them at a flock of pigeons to scatter them. The girl immediately withdrew; she had not spoken a single word, but her hand had lain for a moment in Don José's, narrow and warm, with a palpitation in the fingers.

'Now what do you think?' demanded Doña Mercedes, as the branches rustled behind the girl's figure; she spoke with a sort of predatory eagerness.

'You are to be congratulated, señora; she is as pretty as a bunch of lilies.'

'And needs but a lover to make her as pretty as a bunch of roses,' thrust in the old woman. 'Ay-ay, it is sad to think of so much beauty going into a convent.'

'A convent, did you say, señora?' enquired Don José, discreetly.

'What can one do? I've told you she is very religious. One does not know with a girl as religious as all that. I am prepared for anything. But ay-ay! That fortune! That beautiful fortune—all going into a convent! God forgive me, but when I think of that beautiful fortune . . .!'

Don José sat perfectly still; like a rabbit before a boa-constrictor; like a partridge in front of a trap. He saw the jaws of the trap open widely; the bait on the steel prong.

'When I was a girl——' began Doña Mercedes. He made a smothered exclamation. This was more than flesh and blood could stand!

'Listen, señora; such a girl as your grand-daughter is just what I would like for my son Pepe. He is a good boy, but he needs steadyng. Like all boys, he is too wild. There is no harm in anything that he does, but he would be the better for someone who would sober him down. When he has sons of his own——'

She gave her snickering laugh; the ash fell heavily, in a velvety pile, on to her dusty lap.

'One does not beget children on an angel, Señor Don José!'

'What about the Blessed Virgin herself?'

'*Ave Maria Purísima!* That was another matter—as Josef himself soon found out!' she cackled. 'Now I dare say your son is a very bad fellow indeed! You can tell me nothing about matadors. You are his father, and you want to impress me, but it would not do—it would not do at all—if he started to pay his addresses to a pure young girl, and she found out something.'

'I swear to you,' said Don José, thinking rapidly, 'that there would be nothing for her to find out. But why do we trouble ourselves?' he said, recollecting himself. 'It is a sad thing that our age and our wisdom compels us to trample this matter under-foot, for I give you my word he has never regarded any woman seriously until he saw your grand-daughter.'

'Ay-ay! You don't know what she is like. Believe me or believe me not, she does nothing without praying to God about it! I tell you, she is as obedient as a little child—or as my dog Chico; but, if she has got it into her head that she is going into a convent, there is nothing to be done about it.'

'Yet, surely, if she is as obedient as you say, señora, a word from you——?'

'And why should I say a word?' came the swift, cunning answer. 'A nice account I'd have to settle with Don Felipe if I interfered with her spiritual promptings! At my age one begins to get anxious about annoying the Church.—And I'll tell you something else; her fortune may not be intended to go into a convent, but neither did I mean it to be dissipated by a matador!'

'An investment——' muttered Don José, frowning.

'And such a pretty girl too; God forgive me for saying such a thing, but there seems so little use in a convent for prettiness. In fact, it is quite unnecessary——'

'Well then——!'

'But what is one to do if she makes up her mind?'

'Perhaps she has never realized that there is anything else,' said Don José cautiously. 'Many young girls, when they are pretty and pious, turn towards the convent out of sheer modesty. They have known no man save their confessor——'

'That is true,' sighed Doña Mercedes. 'Pilar has lived closely, here with me. My ideas of bringing up a girl are old-fashioned: I own it. I may be myself to blame for her holy ideas. A priest can gain great influence over a girl who is docile like Pilar; I should not wonder if she is a little bit in love with him! After all, a sotana doesn't unmake a man, and it's only natural . . .'

Don José felt that he would burst if he could not bring this rambling, drivelling old woman to a direct statement. What did she mean by these references to her grand-daughter's 'fortune'? What was the fortune, and when did the girl inherit? And was it possible, after all, that the rumour had not lied: that all this parade of poverty was a mask for wealth? All Granada believed it was so: but all Granada had not been inside the Carmen de los Arrayánes.

'The girl does not know herself what she is worth,' Doña Mercedes was mumbling. 'I have made a secret of it, for you know I did not want her to fall into the hands of an adventurer—like—who was it? Like poor Laura Aguilar, who married—now who did she marry? Never mind. She has been brought up in frugality, as I was before I married my husband. She knows nothing of the value of money. No woman knows how to handle money. I do not, myself. But I have had the sense to know that money is security. That is why I have never touched my own. It is as I received it at my husband's death. There may be more, there may be less, but not much either way; I get my accounts from those who manage my affairs—in Madrid. And the whole of it is willed to my grand-daughter. *Madre mia!* You would

not believe what it amounts to! There is not such another fortune in Andalucía.'

Words, thought Don José; one must have more than words. He was anxious to believe; but in so vital a matter one dare leave nothing to mere credulity. The very worst side of him was uppermost, as it invariably was when any question of money arose. He was not used to transacting business with women; and with a mad woman——! Yet how much common sense might lie behind her madness? Don José was not one to fling away an opportunity without making sure, first, that it was worthless.

'Señora,' he said desperately. 'I fully understand what an anxiety the guardianship of such a fortune must put upon you. As you say, a woman is not intended to handle money. There are many evil people about who are on the look out to take advantage of the unprotected.'

'That's so, that's so,' she whimpered. 'You would not believe——! Even living here like a beggar——! Not that she ever complains—the little angel; but then she has known nothing better. I have taught her to think in centimos. What a treasure such a wife would be for a poor man! The word extravagance is not in her vocabulary. She who, if she liked, could go shod in satin, with golden heels to her shoes—and what feet they are, señor! I saw you observing them—she believes herself to be the bride of poverty.'

'Wedded to my son,' said Don José boldly, 'there would be no need for such self-denial.'

She gave a shriek.

'Who ever heard of such a thing?'

'Let us think of it,' said Don José.

'There would be, of course, marriage settlements.'

'What about them? We have talked enough about business. I want to look at my rose-trees; I want to go down to my lake and feed the peacocks.'

You don't slip out of my hands like that, you old devil, thought

Don José, down whose face the sweat was freely streaming. It had been a curious battle, fought in the dark by two adversaries determined each to yield no point to the enemy. No definite word had been spoken on either side, neither could tell which was winning; but Don José's hard gaze stripped the tegument of old age and went straight to her soul, small like his own. It wriggled like a creature that seeks to bed itself deeper in slime, but his gaze penetrated it, held it like a fish on the fisherman's trident.

'I am eighty-four,' she whined. 'In a few months, perhaps, I shall be dead, and she will have her fortune. The lawyers have had enough out of me! I'll make no settlements.'

Don José compressed his lips and shook his head slowly from side to side.

'Come, señora. That is not the way to strike a bargain. Do you want to leave your grand-daughter unprotected when you are gone?'

'The Church will look after her,' whined Doña Mercedes.

'A husband would do it better,' he said drily.

'A matador? In a year, in eighteen months, can you see my grand-daughter without a peseta to call her own?'

'You have curious ideas about matadors, señora. I have said money makes money. The egg has to come before the chicken. But one has to make sure of the egg! As my son's wife she would live like a daughter of the King of Spain. The fortune would be doubled.'

'That sounds very nice,' simpered the old woman foolishly.

'So long as the fortune is there to start with!'

'What do you accuse me of?'

'It is better to have things fixed on a business-like basis,' said Don José stonily. There was a pause, during which, with a callous triumph, he felt her, like a dead animal, under his feet. Then, suddenly, disconcertingly, he felt his balance shaken; there was nothing under his feet! Nothing! His self-confidence slid down a steep hill into limbo.

'Do you want to strip me before I am in my coffin? Do you



want to choke the breath out of my body? I am an old woman, and I dare say you think the old feel nothing? I am too old to love, and I am perhaps too old to hate; but I am not too old to lust after that which I have. I am living on my lust. Take a grain of it away from me and I shall bleed to death.'

He was totally taken aback. Did she indeed expect him to betroth his son to her grand-daughter without a word of proof that this 'fortune' existed?

'Living, I will part with nothing. It is not too long to wait before I am dead.'

His vexation broke out before he could control himself. Had his father had to go through all this before the Aguilars were persuaded to part with their daughter?

'Some proof—something in writing——' he muttered.

She made a lot of ado, but he could feel her resistance weakening. He sat like an image of stone through a long pantomime of lost keys, of infirmity, of caution and secrecy—that impressed him as little as play-acting. For, to Don José, only two things mattered: the first, the establishment of the mythical wealth of Doña Mercedes Borrás, and, second, the securing of such wealth, if it existed, for his son. To neither of these self-centred people did it occur, at the time, to consult the opinions of the being most vitally affected by the bargain which each, on their own terms, was determined upon clinching.

When Don José left the Carmen de los Arrayánes the sweat was still streaming down his face, and his brain felt as though it were on fire with the ordeal it had been through. For the last half-hour the old woman's conversation had been entirely fantastic; she had sat, throned in her shabby chair—they had returned to the house—with her face burning a dull crimson, her eyes shining, and her fan going like a windmill.

'My grand-daughter has been brought up among every luxury,' she cried, quite forgetting her previous statement about Pilár's apprenticeship to poverty. 'Look, señor, at these rich curtains! And have you ever seen such tapestries? These cushions of velvet—where have you ever seen such a colour, save in the Escorial

itself? Let down more carpets, more carpets!' she cried suddenly, in a high voice. 'Lay them down one on another, so that the sefior can see what my grand-daughter is accustomed to! Send servants——'

It was as though she were selling the girl, thought Don José, unmoved; a more sensitive mind would have been pained, a more delicate one revolted by it, a pitiful one wrought upon to the point of tears. Don José sat unmoved, with his hands folded on the handle of his walking-stick. How long did these frenzies last? How real, or how unreal, were they?

Suddenly the door opened, and the girl came in. She went to her grandmother, passing before Don José to do so. She laid both her hands upon her grandmother's brow. In doing so, she looked, for the first time, fully at Don José. The direct gaze of her eyes affected him in a manner curiously unpleasant; they accused him. He remembered the same look in the eyes of a young bull which, in the nervous days of his novilladas, he had killed badly; a mute, submissive, infinitely reproachful look, from some remote pinnacle of nobility to which he could not aspire. He supposed that the girl looked at him in that way because he had been troubling her grandmother. He could think of no other reason for it. He pursed his lips, frowned, gathered about himself the assurance and authority of his superior years, directed upon her the glance he gave to people who exceeded their position in addressing him; at such a glance he was accustomed to seeing people blush, turn aside, become suddenly deferential, or even servile. She stood there, wholly unconscious, behind her grandmother's chair, looking at him with no change of expression. And it suddenly seemed to Don José that the look she gave him was a look between themselves, that it had no connection with Doña Mercedes; it was as though a secret inhabitant looked out from the crystal windows of the girl's eyes, a creature of whose existence she herself might have been ignorant, her truly living self. The effect upon her appearance was extraordinary; the hard and silvery virginity that had half attracted, half repelled Don José at their previous meeting seemed to dissolve, without any

volition on her part. Still virginal, her virginity was a virginity of tenderness and tears, of infinite compassion, of candlelight and outspread hands . . . *'You are betraying me.'*

Don José closed his eyes and shook his head sharply to dispel the singular illusion.

The old woman had fallen to trembling, to clutching at her grand-daughter's gown; and presently she said:

'There! Did I not tell you she was an angel? Never, never would I part with such a one.' To the girl she said, with a startling lucidity: 'This, my little treasure, is Señor Don José Díaz Marquez, who has a son. Now, I dare say you are so innocent that you do not even know what it means when a gentleman who has a son comes calling upon your grandmother?'

If she does not, she is a fool! thought Don José. The girl's large eyes, glittering again with her hard silver, seemed to widen a little into surprise or incredulity.

'How do you like the idea of having a young man to court you?' sniggered Doña Mercedes.

Don José looked at her almost greedily, expecting her to blush, but she remained undisturbed. The lashes enhaloed her eyes like black rays of a star. This gave her a look of innocence such as he never remembered seeing, save in the eyes of his own son, Juan, when the latter was a baby. It was so sincere one could not pretend to doubt it.

'I don't know. I never thought about it.'

'Eh? Not when young men look at you in church?'

'In church I don't look at young men,' said Pilár simply.

Doña Mercedes spread out the palms of her hands as though Pilár had just performed successfully an extraordinarily difficult trick for which she herself was responsible.

'And I swear it is the truth, the simple truth, Señor Don José.'

Don José found a taxi on its way down the hill, and was driven to the office of his lawyer.

'The whole thing is preposterous! There isn't a shred of proof, beyond the will. I'll go no farther with it.'

The lawyer, Gomez, lifted his shoulders, spread out his hands, and showed his gold stoppings. Don José, and not himself, had seen the will, he indicated; there was, of course, such a thing as forgery, but one did not go so far as to suggest . . .

'Suggest what you like of that old witch up at the Alhambra! She'd tie a knot in the devil's tail!'

'There is no smoke without fire,' said Gomez surprisingly. 'And for the last ten years there has been enough smoke round the Carmen de los Arrayanes to cure a thousand pigs! Wait a little; we shall find out something; you don't want to miss a goldmine for lack of a spade.'

'*Madre de Dios*, and one does not want to wait while the spade is being made. You know how things are with Pepe.'

Gomez fingered the paper on which, in the taxi, Don José had scribbled down some figures: the ones which had remained in his memory from the extraordinary document which he had been shown.

'If these are right, the romancers will have a fine triumph! But you say the will's five years old? That was before the monarchy had fallen; you know what the Republic has done to capitalists. She may have had a warning beforehand; it may account for her living up there like a beggar. She spent more freely when the girl was younger.' If something could be got out of the old woman or her lawyers, in writing, added Gomez, there would be no need to trouble about the settlements; old people were often eccentric, and, provided the girl kept on the right side of her grandmother, there was no reason to look for trouble. Once the betrothal was made public, loans could be arranged.

'How can there be a betrothal when the whole thing is up in the clouds?'

'*Claro.*' The lawyer tapped his teeth with the butt end of his fountain-pen. 'The thing to do is to get the old lady to arrange an interview between us and her lawyers. From what you say she seems as anxious to get the girl married as you are to fix up Pepe's business. Her notion, of course, is to keep the money

out of the hands of the Jesuits,' he added, dropping an eyelid. 'I'll have a talk with her——'

Don José left the office in a thoughtful mood. He was relieved, and surprised, to find that Gomez treated with something like gravity a situation which he had expected him to pooh-pooh out of existence; but he could not rid himself of a feeling that so far as Pilár Borrás was concerned Pepe's future hung by a spider-thread. The metaphor occurred to him aptly enough as he thought of Doña Mercedes' *salon*; by a spider-thread! He would have turned down the whole thing, had any other immediate solution offered itself. But money was scarce in Granada; there were no wealthy families who would be likely to entertain the advances of a young matador. He persuaded himself that it was Pepe who, temporarily conquered by a pretty face, had driven him into this corner; he lacked the honesty to admit to himself his own avariciousness, which, as Gomez had said, was not going to miss a gold-mine for lack of a spade, and which could not be appeased until it had thoroughly explored the most unlikely of channels before turning elsewhere in its search.

He was surprised to find his consideration of Pepe's interests infiltrated with thoughts of the girl who had engaged his son's attention. He now found himself remembering, with an extraordinary fidelity, a number of small things about her; the way her head drooped meekly, a little sideways, like a madonna's; the soft docility of her narrow hand which had lain in his; a look about her at once gentle, eager, and submissive—more like a good child than a girl who had reached marriageable age. Pepe had been deceived, of course, by the sensuous lines of her mouth—a mere trick of facial architecture. Her air was pure and direct, devoid of studied captivations. Her loveliness was unconscious—he began to find awkward comparisons for it: a lamb; a dove; a lily—all white things. Things towards which even the most self-centred and materialistic of persons feels a degree of tenderness. Innocence made the sentimental appeal to Don José, which it does to most men of a disingenuous habit of mind. But he doubted its appeal to Pepe, who, true to type, demanded some-

thing more highly spiced and coloured: not having yet come to the knowledge that spice and colouring, while agreeable in their place, pall with over-familiarity. Such qualities are tiresome in a wife, and Pepe must learn, for a little while at any rate, to do without them.

However, at the present moment, stimulated, no doubt, by the apparent inaccessibility of his choice, Pepe was in love with the girl—or sufficiently in love to be driven, under the additional compulsion of financial necessity, to make a bid for her hand. A curious uncertainty clouded Don José's thoughts. The inexplicable look she—or something within her—had given him disturbed him, as an accusation disturbed him. Of what did she accuse him? What could such a look mean from her to him? And what was the secret power within her which enabled her to stamp herself on his thoughts?

He had spoken truly when he had told Doña Mercédes that he had never tampered with young girls. He had, indeed, the smallest possible acquaintance with virtuous women, outside of his own family. But he had the sentimental love for children which is a characteristic of his countrymen. It occurred to him that if Doña Laura had survived the birth of Juan she might have given him a daughter; this, he felt, would have been an agreeable thing. He would have worshipped, praised, and utterly spoilt her. Somewhere, he felt, in the depths of himself was a spring of tenderness which could only be tapped by a daughter. He tried, tentatively, the effect of directing some flow of this tenderness towards the girl who might become his daughter-in-law. As an experiment the effort was not a success; he could not feel himself buying the girl sweetstuffs; watching, half with jealousy and half with pride, the impression she made upon her sweethearts; chuckling over the growth of coquetry in the little thing that had clung about his knee; inventing a language of fond half-fatherly, half-loverly, significance in which to communicate with her; scolding and fondling her. These natural accompaniments of fatherhood seemed outlandish in connection with Pilár Borrás. His mind, discomfited, turned elsewhere for

reassurance, and now it was the prospect of grandfatherhood that attracted him. Perhaps, when she had borne some sons, this girl would give him a grand-daughter, in whom he would find the solution of that unfulfilled part of himself of which he had become suddenly aware.

Yet even this failed. None of the easy and familiar adjustments of male to female served to bridge the gap between him and the girl whom he had just met; neither sex nor sentiment would solve the riddle of a personality which recalled uneasily to the mind of Don José his meagre acquaintanceship with the saints.

## Four

**T**HERE is born no son of the vinestock but inherits certain nobilities that, no matter how vast may be the accretions of corrupt and base matter that time silts upon the original stock, yet survive in some form or other, and pass, in a man's seed, to his sons. Don José was an Andalucian, born of Andalucian stock, and underneath those gross accretions of his professional years, as under a load of offal, choked and moribund yet not wholly extinct, lay the proofs of his heritage.

To a circle of his friends, Don José said:

'The procreative force is threefold. My sons have three fathers and one father. My eldest born sprang from the place that all children are supposed to spring from. He is the son of my youth, when all of a young man's life centres just *there*. The second comes from my stomach—it is a poor place, my stomach, I own it. The first bull that got me saw to that. And the youngest, Juan, springs from here and here——' Don José struck his chest and his forehead, raised his glass, and invited his friends to drink in celebration of his threefold parentage.

It was Juan, the child of Don José's heart and head, who inherited that rich legacy of the Andalucian temperament which was indifferently typified in his father. Pepe, indeed, stood for the crude reproductive instinct in all its brutality and thoughtlessness, its lack of sentiment, and its utilitarianism. His lusty strength, his crude good looks, his vanity, and his ruffianism delighted that part of his father that still took an unregenerate pride in his own youth—which Pepe's bade fair to emulate. And



Miguel was as truly the child of his father's failures, moral and physical: of all that ruined part of himself that Don José would fain have forgotten, but which nagged at times as his abdominal wounds nagged. A lonely, soured, silent child, holding himself apart from everyone, a mute witness, a crooked conscience for ever at his father's elbow.

All that part of Don José which had been blunted and coarsened by his gross style of living blossomed freely in the delicate Juan: all those tender qualities which are so typically Andalusian—passion for home and country; sensitiveness to the beauties of the lovely land that had given him birth; a nature so interwoven with music and poetry that the golden threads could not be separated one from another; idealism that soared so far above common fact that his soul for ever floated upon a cloud and his feet never achieved any positive contact with the earth.

He stood very quietly, drawn up in the angle of two walls, with his hands clasped in the nape of his neck and his elbows and upper arms planted squarely against the warm stonework. His ankles were crossed, the weight of his body carried upon one foot, covered in a black alpargata. His head rested in the angle, cushioned upon the thickness of its own black hair, and all of the immobility of his body reached its ultimate expression in his face. Serene, without thought, composed as a mask, unstirred save at long intervals by the rhythmic descent of the eyelids, an uncontrollable and wholly unconscious movement that but served to emphasize their owner's apathy.

The position of arms and torso drew the taut arc of immature ribs into clean relief under the thin, sweat-soaked shirt; the loosely belted shorts slipped down hips too narrow to support them. It was as though the strength of the body broke at the waist; below came a sagging of muscles, a more pronounced abandonment to the lethargic influences at work about this strange human, yet hardly human, thing that hung in the angle of the walls, limp between its two points of contact.

It was Juan Díaz Marquez's solution of the problem of keeping cool at an hour of the day when silence settled upon the patios, and heat came smothering in an almost visible blanket upon the narrow climbing streets, the saffron roofs, the white parched terraces where the *petitmini* roses shrivelled into ashen clusters in the first blasts of summer that turned the low-lying part of the town into a furnace. The heat had come early that year; April had not yet broken into May, and the sierra still carried its snows when the scourge and blessing of the heat bound together in a common lethargy the three parts of the town. Alhambra, Albaicin, and city frizzled in the hard, brazen light.

A narrow passage of leaning walls, buttressed apart, offered a violet channel of shade for Juan's siesta, which he shared with a couple of mongrel dogs. Their bodies were pressed into the dust; muzzles on paws they slumbered, too languid to chase the flies whose presence sent a ripple every now and again down their spines.

The stillness of his body, the immobility of his face, belied the activity of his brain, in which the thoughts buzzed like blue-bottles under glass. He was trying to solve a problem; one of such magnitude that he had almost begun to despair of a solution. It was the problem of how to avoid going to the bull-fight.

It was a problem which was likely to recur on successive Sundays for the next seven months, and unless he could settle it now, for good, in some definite manner, the weeks ahead were going to resolve themselves into stretches of apprehension, reaching their horrid climax about five o'clock on Sunday afternoons. Nor was the avoidance of them to be accomplished without sacrifice: the sacrifice of an experience almost as precious to Juan as his abhorrence of the one it accompanied. It meant giving up the joy of accompanying his father, together with the thrill of witnessing the deference which Don José inspired in the people whom they met, which fed Juan's hero-worship for the man who loved him so much and knew him so little.

Juan longed, sometimes, to make himself apprehensible to his father, but this seemed impossible. They were like two people

on opposite sides of a reja, who look at one another with infinite loving, but can never come to complete knowledge of one another. He longed passionately to be able to say to his father, 'See, father, I am this, and this, and this'; but how could he?—for he did not properly know what he was; and, if he had known, he could not have found a vocabulary in which to make it plain to Don José. He was technically—that is, so far as age went—a schoolboy; he loved poetry, singing, the ineffable country that surrounds Granada, the town's ancient and bloody history, its ancient buildings, its tragic beauty, its latter-day melancholy; and he hated the bull-ring and all in connection with it—the wretched horses tottering on their stick-like legs, padded—that last refinement of cruelty to horse and bull alike—blindfolded; being dragged up to the bull by peones, rocking on the horns, falling like disjointed marionettes, being covered with a tarpaulin that made them more ghastly than their own blood; the banderilleros planting their beribboned darts in flesh that was already a raw puddle with the picadores' varas; the matador dishonouring the bull with muleta-play before the sword went in; the bull itself staggering, plunging, dropping on its knees, as though praying to be delivered from its agony, and finally—oh, last and worst humiliation—being dragged across the sand by the jingling mule-teams.

Yet all this, in deference to his father's profession, he might have supported, had it not been for the sickening necessity of accompanying his father behind the scenes, into the bloody shambles where all that is ignoble in connection with the bull-fight takes place: where the stench of blood is unendurable; where the sight of the dead horses, grotesque in their abandonment, was less offensive to Juan than the frightful stables in which these victims are housed, pending their appearance in the ring; than the pens behind the toril where the first stages of the bulls' martyrdom is evinced in the gashed woodwork; than the hospital, with its stench of iodoform and anæsthetics, with surgeons standing about nonchalantly in their bloody white coats, smoking cigarettes and jesting with the pics; than the débris of the cutting-up yard.

Don José felt that he was conferring a privilege upon his son in taking him behind the scenes to talk with matadors and banderilleros, a privilege for which nine out of ten boys in Granada would have given their ears; he expected Juan to take an interest in all the things that affected him with so profound a horror that it was with the greatest difficulty that he restrained his desire to be sick. He felt the muscles of his cheeks contracting, a creeping sensation in the roots of his hair, and a fearful emptiness at the pit of his stomach; the sight of a matador's cloak, soaked in crimson, was so abhorrent to him that he was obliged to turn his head away. He was saved from disgracing himself once, in the operating theatre, where Don José had taken him to see a friend who had received a minor cornada, by the surgeon's kindly remark that a good many people could not stand the smell of ether. On hearing this, Juan, with the greatest possible relief, fainted dead away, and was not taken to the hospital again. But he was not let off other experiences, which Don José seemed to expect him to take as much for granted as though his own future lay in the bull-ring.

Juan suffered it, as he suffered being taught how to manipulate the cape and muleta, because he adored his father. But behind Don José's kindness, as Juan well knew, lay a degree of compulsion whose power he had never attempted to challenge. He knew now that he dare not challenge it; that if it were to be circumvented at all it could only be by guile.

If he said he did not wish to go to the bull-fight, Don José would be, not merely deeply offended, but wounded in the depths of his being. He would, without doubt, order Juan straight into the taxi which always took them there. Yet the boy knew that his horror of the ring had never risen to such a pitch as it had done in the present season: that going to the ring was like death to some part of him that felt more sharply than flesh or blood.

He remembered an extraordinary conversation to which he had once listened on a night when Don José held a tertulia of his more intimate friends; there was present a dignified company

of aficionados, of whom perhaps the most distinguished was the poet Perez da Vaiga. The talk turned, as usual, on bull-fighting, but was maintained, at least by da Vaiga, on a higher and more philosophical plane than usual. It is unusual to meet with philosophers among aficionados; as with the matadors, it is the *thing* that counts, and not its motivations. But da Vaiga had drunk much of the vino de la Riva, which is among the noblest products of Andalucía, and his tongue outran the material discussion of his companions, so that what he spoke was, to all intents and purposes, a panegyric on the bull-fight, upon its mystic significance. The others listened, with that respectful attention which is always given to the expression of a poet's creed. Bits of the panegyric had lodged themselves in Juan's retentive though immature mind. He was not sure of their meaning, but because they proceeded from the lips of Perez da Vaiga they carried an august authority which condemned his own attitude to the bull-fight. The words remained with him like strophes of a dramatic poem, often disconnected, yet held together by the thought they embodied:

'The bull-fight is a tragedy. It is the greatest tragedy since the Crucifixion; and, like the Crucifixion, it has attained so high and noble a significance that nothing can degrade it.' (Could evil, passing down the ages, be alchemized into good?)

'As Christ hung upon the cross in expiation of the sins of the world, so the bull, and sometimes the matador, is sacrificed that mankind may attain a higher nobility. Their strength is the atonement for our weakness. . . .

'The bull-fight exists upon its own nobility; nothing can destroy it, because the Spanish nation reacts to tragedy as the Greeks reacted. Where the Greeks had their Euripides and their Sophocles, we have had our Bailarín, our Belmonte, and our Joselito, who wrote a new act of the tragic cycle every time they picked up the sword and muleta. . . .'

At these words Juan loved to remember that all glasses were raised towards Don José, who made his usual grave acknowledgment of the compliment.

'In the bull-fight, every Spaniard consummates his manhood; his love of valour, his appreciation of the artistic and beautiful, his personal honour, are all bound up in this act which takes place in order that every man may have before his eyes the ideal of human valour to which his soul aspires. . . .

'To destroy the bull-fight would be to destroy a moral force greater than the Church itself, and which has outlasted the Church. . . .

'Since the fall of the Church the bull-fight is the only thing which remains to preserve the moral integrity of Spain. It is the principal source of our manhood, our patriotism, and our pride. . . .'

Often, on the verge of self-betrayal, these words came into Juan's mind, convicting him of unmanliness, forcing him into an unintentional hypocrisy. At all costs he must conceal his abhorrence of the national sport, which seemed to Juan the more sinister for the mystical implications which Perez da Vaiga drew about it; must feign an enthusiasm he was incapable of feeling, because to reveal his true attitude would be to convict himself publicly of ignominy.

The youngest son of El Bailarín had all the frail and spurious aristocracy of feature and demeanour which lends, in the eyes of sentimental foreign ladies, a false romanticism to Spanish youths: the full-orbed eye, liquid and languid, partly veiled by its lids of inexpressible indolence and partly by the thick fringe of jet-black lashes that cast an umber shadow into the transparency of the cheek below; a rose-like mouth that closed over teeth of milky whiteness. The face owed much of its beauty to its weakness: to the effeminacy of the small pointed chin, to the sensitive nostrils that articulated the fine aquiline nose. It is a classic type which nature has perpetuated among a people whose aristocracy comes from the soil that breeds them; you may come across it in the sons of grandees and in little republicans brawling over their *futbol* in side-streets; matadors have it, and water-sellers; a beggar will suddenly raise his head to startle you with a profile which one feels originated on a canvas by Velazquez.

In character he was quiet, secret, and pessimistic; his manner unconsciously derived much from Don José's. Already his movements were faintly processional, as though an invisible multitude hung upon his comings and goings; yet much humility was concealed beneath this arrogant exterior. Juan felt himself a poor thing beside the three to whom his devotion was given in varying degrees: his father, his brother Bailarinito, and his brother Miguel.

Some detached particle of his mind had for some time concerned itself in trying to identify in advance the people whose shadows crossed the burning white space beyond his shelter. Now, through one half-opened eye, he watched a shadow which, instead of passing, continued to weave its purple design upon one spot of the arid dust. Like a gigantic butterfly it flapped soundlessly, its origin concealed; a faint scuffle of feet, in alparbatas like his own, came to the listening ears of Juan. He knew exactly what it meant. He knew that the shadow was not there by accident, but that it was deliberately planned to catch his attention.

Out it came again, like a butterfly with one wing; this time it was followed by a scrap of material of a faded magenta; as though conscious of too great daring, this manœuvre was followed by stillness, in which the white dust glared at him, undisturbed.

It was Tomás, the boy from the wine-shop on the corner. He was practising, with someone's old discarded cape, the media-veronica with the recorte; practising it there out in the broiling sun, kicking up the dust which rose a few inches, only to settle upon his ragged shoes. It was an occupation which one may see any hour of the day among the youngsters of Sevilla, of Ronda, of any Spanish town where the bull-fighting interest is lively. But in Granada, a town whose poverty and isolation have set their fatal seal upon the enthusiasms of the people, it is unusual.

Juan knew that Tomás was there; and he knew that Tomás meant him to know he was there. It was Tomás's way of coaxing him to come out and criticize and correct; or simply to stand where Tomás could see him watching. A slow smile, faintly tinged with cruelty, curved Juan's lips. Tomás was his chattel.

He planted his elbows more firmly against the wall. He would remain just where he was, teasing Tomás with his invisible presence. Or would it be more amusing to stroll out, to snatch the tattered percale from the inept hands of Tomás, and, very superbly, very slowly, in silence, and with utmost dexterity, to perform the mariposa of Lalanda?—and then, allowing the cape to fall, to stroll slowly back to his seclusion? There was only one objection, so far as Juan was aware, to this magnificent programme: which was that he had not, as yet, mastered the mariposa of Lalanda. On the whole, it might be better to remain where he was. He allowed the breath to escape from his nostrils and his whole body to sag more deeply into the convenient angle of the walls.

Tomás became very animated, scuffling his feet noisily and grunting; Juan could hear him—‘*Huh—toro! Huh—toro!*’ Curiosity goaded him into peeping round the corner.

Tomás had evidently got his bull levantado; he was tearing round the square like a human windmill. Why? *Madre de Dios*, why? As if anyone would ever move like that in the ring, unless the bull’s horns were less than an inch from one’s buttocks. And, even then, to splay out one’s limbs in that manner! No more contemptible and vulgar sight could ever disgrace a bull-ring. No, decided Juan gravely, Tomás would never make a matador. He shoulders humped, his chest and stomach hollowed, he would cut a poor figure in the paseo, and the matador who makes a poor entrance never captures the fancy of the aficion. Unconsciously Juan’s left hand stole to his hip, he shoulders squared themselves, his small head reared itself arrogantly on his shoulders. It was so one must carry oneself to make the most of the difficult richness of the matador’s costume. Heredity stretched itself and swaggered in the shadow of the walls.

Tomás plumped on his knees, and sketched so clumsy a movement with the cape that Juan’s lip curled in scorn, and he withdrew, shuddering, into his cool privacy. There could be only one thing worse than to be a bull-fighter: and that was to be a bad bull-fighter.



He scowled, feeling his peace disturbed; try as he might, his shoulders could not again establish satisfactory contact with the wall. The roughness stuck into his flesh, and a lump seemed to have risen in the place where formerly his head had rested. Would it be agreeable, as the heat was still on, to go and sit in the cool patio of Tomás's wine-shop, and play with the crayfish that scrambled in the stone tank under the fountain? The patio would be empty at this hour save for its ancient proprietress, who would certainly be asleep in her small stifling corner behind the counter. Sometimes in the afternoons, when Trini was asleep, he and Tomás amused themselves by racing crayfish along the marble table, betting on the result in centimos. Juan usually won, because he had a gift for picking the best crayfish; but he never took Tomás's centimos, because the son of El Bailarín could not take centimos, even when he won them, from a wine-shop boy.

Racing crayfish did not make any particular appeal, however, in his present mood. Besides, he had his problem to solve: he did not wish to be bothered with Tomás, whose talk was all of bull-fights and matadors and what sort of bulls might be expected for the fight on Sunday. He found Tomás's old-wives' tales of the bull-ring unspeakably tedious—nearly as tedious as Tomás's hero-worship for himself, because he was the son of El Bailarín, the brother of Bailarinito. He had seen Tomás looking at his father, as Don José sat in the patio to have his shoes cleaned, as if it would give him—Tomás—the very greatest gratification to lick those boots clean with his own spittle.

Juan yawned elaborately; he made a business of it; the echoes of the yawn would, he hoped, reach Tomás and warn him that he, Juan Díaz, was abysmally bored, and in no mood to be bothered with company.

The yawn fulfilled at least a part of its object: the square became suddenly still; the dust, which Tomás had been churning up so ferociously, settled; and the mongrel dog at Juan's heels snapped suddenly at a flea. The son of El Bailarín and the brother of Bailarinito balanced himself on both his feet and

pulled the damp shirt away from his ribs to cool them. He scowled as the round face of Tomás, peeping round the corner, intruded upon his occupation.

'What do you want?' enquired Juan coldly.

Tomás came grinning into the shade; the sweat was pouring down his freckled face into the open neck of his white shirt, which was clean, because it happened to be Sunday. His light hair stuck up in points with moisture, and his gay eyes were, as usual, wrinkled up into slits of laughter.

'What do you think?' he began. '*Hombre*, but I've had a fine bit of luck! Enrique's twisted his ankle and he can't go to the bull-fight!'

'I don't see what that does for you,' muttered Juan, one half of his mind busy with an individual who had the incredible good fortune to avoid going to the bull-fight, and the other unable to resist Tomás, whose good nature was incapable of perceiving a snub.

'Why, *hombre*! I'm going for him! He can just limp about enough to get customers their drinks if any come—not that they will; everyone's going to the fight,' said Tomás, with conviction. 'And I'm going to sell syphon-water in the ring! Mind you buy some from me,' he concluded, with an eye to business.

The words brought home to Juan the awful imminence of his ordeal. The shadows were already lengthening on the dust; the sun had lost its midday virulence. If he was going, he ought to be changing his clothes. Sudden nausea made him thrust out his hand against the wall and drop his head. Tomás was too excited immediately to notice.

'It's bad luck, though—they say they're a bad lot of bulls. They say there isn't one that weighs more than twenty arrobas! That's not much better than a big dog! You bet there'll be an enquiry if they don't look out! It's not the first time they've got round the veterinary! It can't go on for ever, you know! Why, they say that Romerito was so mad when he saw what Perlacia's drawn that he—that he—— Are you sick, Juan?' asked Tomás suddenly; the drawn face of the other had penetrated his

excitement, and his quick sympathy drove out his ardour for the time being.

Juan raised his head; the hair fell in limp plumes over his forehead; his face was nearly as wet as Tomás's, and olive-green. He bit his underlip to stop its quivering.

'I do feel sick sometimes—these days,' he muttered defiantly. Never would he admit, even to the devoted Tomás, the cause of his sickness.

Tomás stood with feet apart and arms akimbo, eyeing with side-tilted head and the preternaturally solemn expression of a quack physician his suffering friend.

'I'll tell you what it is,' he said confidentially. His hand fell kindly on Juan's shoulder. 'What you want is a girl. *Hombre!* Here you are, fifteen years of age, and you haven't made a man of yourself! It's not natural. Try having a girl. I tell you, you'll feel quite different after it.'

Juan wondered miserably if Tomás was right. His advice was kindly, well meant, and did not contain, from Tomás's point of view, a grain of impropriety. Virginity, at Juan's age, was indeed unnatural; he knew it himself. He could not understand the strange nervousness which prevented his challenging the experiment which Tomás so confidently recommended. He could even less explain to Tomás that women and girls, to him, were such delicate, rare, and evasive beings that he could not even contemplate their beauty without wishing to make himself small, humble, and invisible: that the effect they had upon him was, so far, wholly cerebral, driving him to poetry as the supreme consummation of his emotions. And from the girls of the neighbourhood he shrank with a terror that he did not attempt to analyse, beyond the fact that it had something to do with their experience and his own inexperience. As a child he had had his brothers to play with; he had never been thrown upon the company of little girls, with whom to exchange those furtive and uncleanly sex experiments regarding which Pepe had obligingly enlightened him. Pepe's descriptions awoke no desires, and vaguely alarmed and disgusted him; they seemed to have no

possible connection with the romantic man-woman relationship which his imagination painted.

'You'll be no good until you've had a girl,' repeated Tomás, with the simplicity of complete conviction. 'I tell you it will put guts into you! I'll tell you what—come along with me to-night; there's a special thing at La Montillana, and I'll easily coax Enrique to let me out for an hour. The girls there are very nice—you won't be at all nervous after the first few minutes. *Hombre!* it's no worse than having a tooth out!' protested the solicitous Tomás. 'And, look here, when it's over you won't get these funny feelings any longer. Take my word, that's all that's the matter with you. For a few pesetas you can put yourself right. You will see. Now, is that fixed? I think I can get away at eleven, or a bit later, unless there's a crowd in the shop.'

Juan mumbled that he would see about it: he seemed to have two places of vibration in his body, one high up and the other rather low; his body seemed like a thin web draped round these two places, which, with their continued vibration, would surely tear it to pieces. How poor, how weak, how mean he was! His youth was poisoned; he had a sickness that prevented his being like other boys! Could it possibly be that the cure lay in Tomás's prescription? His teeth chattered at the prospect; physically and spiritually he shrank away from it; yet he felt, at that moment, that if, by offering his body to the stake, he could be transmuted into a boy like Tomás, a boy who enjoyed the bull-fight and enjoyed girls, instead of writing poetry about them, he would cheerfully have done so. He would have the double reward of consolidating his personal honour and of bringing great joy to his father. How much longer would he succeed in concealing this poor and unmanly thing that he was from Don José?

Their further conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the taxi, which came lurching over the square like a ship in a heavy sea, to draw up before the Casa del Matador. With a sickening heart he realized that it was the taxi which took him and his father to the Plaza de Toros. Tomás gave a whoop, and vanished to get hold of his syphons; it was just possible that he

might steal a ride on the back of Don José's taxi for a part of the way along the Gran Via.

Juan fled upon noiseless feet across his own patio and up the stairs. As he tore off his shirt and breeches, slammed open the doors of cupboards and rummaged in a cabinet for the odds and ends of his toilette, his own pale, scared face met him from a dozen bits of looking-glass. He tried to keep his mind off the bull-ring by thinking of all the lovely and pleasant things that he put into his poems; he even interrupted his dressing to thrust into an envelope an unfinished poem which he meant to post to his brother Miguel at the Sacro Monte. A longing for Miguel plunged beneath the disturbed surfaces of his mind, and stirred the deep love for his brother which had bound them mysteriously together since his babyhood.

To Juan, Miguel was always 'my brother,' as Pepe was 'Bailarinito,' the name by which he was known to the general public. Between Pepe and Juan there existed, as between Don José and Juan, an invisible barrier, across which they looked and laughed at one another, but never came to any real understanding. He loved Pepe; he admired and envied his valour; but their closer friendship was prevented by Juan's guilty knowledge of how Pepe would despise him if he knew his little brother's attitude towards the bull-fight. Superficially—that is, so far as words went—there was more communication between them than between Juan and Miguel; but this was because Pepe was always talking, laughing, boasting, teasing, so that one would have had to have been a boor to have ignored his chatter; but Juan never *felt* Pepe, as he felt Miguel, with a feeling more intimate than actual knowledge.

They had no apparent need of words, those two. Sometimes, when he and Miguel were in the country alone, all the limitations of their intercourse dissolved under the sweet influences of sun and wind, and he felt his silence link itself into Miguel's and peace descend upon their souls like the wings of a dove. And dimly Juan had come to perceive that to pity Miguel was to insult the spirit that burned inside his brother; so that there was

not even this trivial barrier of misconception between them. Miguel's aches and pains had no share in their conversations. It hurt Juan sometimes to see the cultivated pity with which Don José regarded his second son; even Pepe's casual recognitions of Miguel's physical shortcomings seemed to Juan less injurious to the true Miguel than his father's tutored solicitude. His sensitive perception showed him that the latter was an attitude of mind with which Don José had deliberately forced himself to replace something more genuine, and perhaps more horrible. It was the outcome, not of love, but of forbearance; and for some reason Juan found something terrible in his father's forbearance. It was not a part of that intolerant spirit which was Don José's; it was something called in from outside. It brought a strange atmosphere into the house, as though a stranger sat in their midst. Miguel was aware of it. Perhaps it made him suffer. . . .

If only Miguel were at home! Somehow, Juan felt, he would have managed to break the silence that lay between them, and find words to communicate some of his own painful indecisions to his brother. He did his best to reveal himself in his poems, but did Miguel read between the lines all that he was meant to read? Could he realize that his little brother's mind was crammed so full with dreams of a new and perilous loveliness that his brain felt as though it would burst with them?—dreams of a paradise on earth, and of the love that he longed to experience?—whose intimations made him close his eyes when a girl touched him lightly in a crowded street, when a shadow trembled across the persianas of a lighted room, when he saw two lovers pressed, breast to breast, against the dark *reja* that is the tragedy and the romance of Spanish love? At present the tragic aspect of love dominated his imagination: its frustration, rather than its consummation, appealed to him æsthetically. He saw himself always the despised and rejected lover. He had entered that phase of pure and fragile idealism which precedes a boy's first sexual experience; and to this idealism Tomás's innocent suggestion was a blasphemy, a sin against Aphrodite herself. Yet another

part of him longed to adopt it, to get the business over, to cross the barrier, that separates manhood from the comfortless standing water of adolescence. His trouble was that he could not link up this common and mundane act with the idealistic love which his mind had conceived.

The noise of the taxi-horn ripped into his meditations; he knew that his father had ordered the man to blow it, as a summons to himself. A sharp pang shot through his body, and he felt the muscles slacken at the back of his kness. He was now dressed in his best suit, made by Romero, the expensive tailor on the Gran Via; his first suit from Romero had been a great event in his life. His linen was as immaculate as Don José's; his bow, although tied with a trembling hand, good enough to please a fastidious critic. The pleasant odour of agua de colonia hung about him; his hair was sleeked down with brilliantine. His appearance was such as to do credit to Don José, when, stiffening himself, he stepped quickly in front of the image of Nuestra Señora de las Angustias which is in every house in Granada, and, unable to think of any words, signed himself with the cross.

The distance from his door to the top of the gallery stairs was the space of time that Juan allowed for gaining complete control of himself; he paced it gravely, thrusting his feet down, flinging back his head. He knew exactly how many steps it took, allowing for the stiff sofa, and the round table with an Alpujarran cloth at which Felipa sat to do her mending, which interrupted the clear passage-way to the stairs. He forced himself to identify the objects which he passed on his journey, the heterogeneous pieces of furniture which had overflowed from the living-rooms on to the gallery: old, dark, ecclesiastical-looking pieces; the broken and tarnished gold of bits of baroque; the fifteenth-century chest with the lead lining in which, he believed, some of his mother's garments still were stored; and, on the walls, the dark and murky oil-paintings of religious subjects, whose records of bloody martyrdom were fortunately obscured beneath the grime of years. Each of these objects represented to Juan a station

on his journey to the cross; each offered an infinitesimal respite from the ordeal towards which he was travelling.

The patio was crowded; a babel of voices rose to Juan at the head of the stairs; he could see the usual company which gathered, on the Sundays of the local bull-fights, for his father's departure: beggars of both sexes squatting on the tiles; groups of aficionados loudly gossiping and gesticulating, with an eye on the door of Don José's office; these had a ritual chorus which they always produced for such occasions: 'There's only one El Bailarín! It's not worth while going to see bulls killed nowadays, since he retired. Villalta, Lalanda, Ortega, Bienvenida—they're all tiros when you think of El Bailarín!' They repeated these flattering words in varying degrees of loudness, with their eyes upon the half-open door, behind which Don José was following his usual custom of offering a glass of wine to the taxi-driver, who, in his younger days, had been a picador, and earned his quittance from the ring in preparing a bull for El Bailarín in this very town. The fact that none of these enthusiasts took advantage of their acquaintance to invade Don José's privacy was indicative of the curious distance which he had established between himself and his idolaters.

The taxi-driver appeared, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand, and started to cross the patio. 'He's coming! El Bailarín's coming!'

A faint smile came to Don José's lips as he saw his familiar audience; his eyes, so noncommittal, counted the heads, noting certain absentees, as a shepherd numbers his sheep; he knew who was there and who was not; his mind stored up grudges as readily as it recorded compliments. Like old times: fingers clutching at his coat, kisses pressed upon his hands, children thrust forward to catch his eye. These were the faithful . . . because it paid them to be faithful. He made no mistake about that. In all that crowd there was no single person who had not an axe to grind. Carrajo was there because he had a son who was going into the profession, and wanted Don José's recommendation. Lopez thought that the payment of an inexpensive



compliment would incline Don José to overlook part of the money he owed him. Molinares hoped for a cheap ride to the bull-ring—together with the distinction of being seen with the great ex-matador. And the beggars? How many of the starving mouths of Granada did his kitchens feed? He did not care. They brought their dirt into his patio; for what purpose did he keep servants?

His eye registered the presence of Juan; a momentary gleam lit it; he made an almost imperceptible inclination of the head.

He patted a few heads, asked after a few by name, good-naturedly pushed a few aside, put centimos into the grubby hands of children, waved a few snivelling old women with a lordly hand towards the kitchens—and reached the taxi. The motley crew trooped after him. He drew a folded handkerchief from his pocket, pressed it to his nose; it was drenched with perfume. He closed his eyes for a moment. Going to the corrida . . . twenty years ago . . . yes, it was like this: clamour, clamour, crowds, crowds. Not beggars in those days, nor interested parties, but men—and women too—of position, who saw no indignity in standing to cheer El Bailarín from the pavement.

'*Buenas—buenas*—see you at the barrera.' He leaned back smiling; so much for Molinares, who could trail his patent leather shoes through the dust if he was too mean to spend a couple of pesetas. He did not choose to arrive at the Plaza de Toros packed up like a tourist; if he invited Molinares, the rest would expect to be asked.

At the crucial moment Tomás launched himself from the side of the house, carrying his syphons; Juan caught a glimpse of him, thought of Tomás perched perilously upon the bumper bar as the taxi swung through the traffic; the taxi-driver was slamming the door.

'Father! Couldn't we give Tomás a lift as far as the bull-ring? He's selling syphon-water to-day for Enrique.'

The brows of Don José arched themselves, and his lips were compressed, but he would not allow even so trivial a cloud upon

his own satisfaction as the refusal of a harmless request from his son. Juan spoke authoritatively to the driver; Tomás was brought, crimson-faced, from the back of the car, and installed in the front seat. *Hombre!* If he hadn't the luck to-day! To be riding to the bull-fight with El Bailarín! There was not a boy in Granada who would not be sick with envy if he saw. Mother of Jesus, let *all* Tomás's friends be on the sidewalks, and let the taxi go very, very slowly, so that they should not miss a moment of the spectacle! Stiff with self-consciousness, looking neither to left nor right, Tomás sat while the taxi thrust its nose into the westward-flowing traffic towards the Plaza de Toros. There was no conversation behind him; Don José was reading his newspaper, and Juan's eyes were fixed upon the nape of Tomás's neck, which represented to him comfort, companionship, a friend.

He made an attempt, that afternoon, to avoid going behind the ring; mumbled something about speaking to Tomás, whose beaming countenance was raised from the callejon—where he jostled a score of other itinerant vendors of water, iced sweets, chocolates, and shellfish, not to mention the matadors themselves—like an ecstatic peony. El Estudiante had brought a drink from him; he was bursting to tell Juan about it.

'You must keep suitable company,' said Don José sharply. 'Come with me.'

The fifth bull was in the ring; raising a hand of infinite despair to Tomás, who would surely be hurt that he had not bought a drink from him, he followed his father into the infernal regions: passing a man who, carried in the arms of his comrades, held his punctured stomach together with fingers through which trickled a slow scarlet stream; half stifled by the stench of ammonia; hearing the oaths of the picadores quarrelling bitterly over their mounts; seeing the padding torn off a dying beast and clapped on to another unfortunate. He felt half stunned by the realization of his own victimization as he followed Don José to the lodge of the keeper of the bull-ring, where they were joined by several

friends, who all shook hands affectionately with Juan's father, and greeted Juan with the jests he had learned to expect from his father's acquaintances.

'Well, when are we going to see Bailarinito II in the ring?'

Juan smiled politely, although his lips felt stiff; Don José, pleased with the attention paid to his son, made his usual answer:

'One of these days we shall be trying him out with the young bulls. But he has to harden a little first.'

Although he knew that this was purely a form of speech on his father's part, Juan was glad to conceal his face by bending over an armchair in which a cat suckled four tortoise-shell kittens. The peaceful assurance of domesticity afforded by this spectacle gave him some relief; he tickled the cat tenderly behind her ear.

The small dark room into which they were ushered was plastered with photographs of bulls and matadors, among which latter El Bailarín's was prominently placed, drawing the compliments he never ceased to crave from his companions. The air became stiff with flowery speech; cigars were lit. The table was spread with a flaxen cloth boldly chequered with blue, on which were coarse knives and forks with horn handles; a savoury smell of frying was in the air.

Don José and his friends seated themselves jovially at the table; wine was ordered, and poured into glasses by a lame youth in an apron, who had been a banderillero; and Don José summoned his son to drink. Juan was grateful for the wine; he felt that it would complete his recovery. He hoped that after this his father would choose to leave the bull-ring by the door which led from the lodge directly into the street, rather than force them to retrace their steps by way of the shambles.

The wife of the lodge-keeper entered with a steaming dish, which she placed before Don José; he smiled, nodded, pressed his hand affectionately on Juan's shoulder, and bade him be seated. And suddenly he realized what the food was that sent its savoury fragrance into his nostrils.

It is a great honour to be invited to eat ciadrillas, which are the bull's testicles, and, served like sweetbread, are considered by connoisseurs a great delicacy, besides being credited with imparting virility to their consumers. It was the first time that Juan had been offered them, although Don José, with whom they were a favourite dish, often stayed behind after a bull-fight to share the tit-bit with his friends.

'There you are! Now it will not be long before we have you in the Plaza, showing Ortega how to use the sword!' said one.

Juan took one glance at the morsel in front of him, heaved, and was sick. The rest of the company was stricken speechless; Don José, crimson with mortification, but gentle, as always, with Juan, immediately found causes to account for it. The boy had previously eaten something that disagreed with him; the iced fruits which one buys in the bull-ring are not always reliable. Juan did not remind his father of a fact that Don José knew well: that he had had no iced fruits. He stood leaning against his father's shoulder, holding his head in his hands and wishing he could die. He could feel the stiffness of the shoulder against which he leaned; he knew that, had it not been himself, Don José would have given way to his rage; that, had they not been in company, even he would have had to have borne the brunt of his father's wrath; that Don José was, under cover of his self-control, seriously annoyed and offended, and merely restrained himself because he did not, in public, wish to emphasize Juan's humiliation, lest it should reflect upon himself.

A hollow-eyed, limp Juan requested to be put down at the end of the Gran Via a little later. The taxi was filled with Don José's friends; Juan knew that this was in order that his father should not have the annoyance of riding back alone with the son who had shamed him. Juan had been sent to sit in front, for Tomás was contented enough to struggle home on foot after his glorious experience. Juan turned to face the four men, who seemed to him like strange though well-disposed beasts, separated from him by their middle age, their importance, and their adult experience; instinctively his eyes flinched aside from the falsely

agreeable expression of his father's face. He was at this hour, had not this terrible power of separating Don José's mind and the behaviour from his inner mind; why could not his father deceive him as successfully as he deceived other people? It would be so much happier for them both if he could.

'You must come home and have your food, my son.'

'I'm not hungry, father. I would rather take a walk.'

Don José's sharp glance took in the sick look of the boy; recollections of his delicate infancy stirred uneasily in his memory. It might be the heat—and his age. It could not be that the boy was . . . squeamish. Juan had to settle himself. Meanwhile one must be as easy as possible with him.

'Get out,' he ordered, and Juan obeyed. He stood on the edge of the pavement, swaying slightly, watching the taxi as it swerved into the Reyes Católicos. It carried his shame with it; as it vanished, Juan drew a deep breath of relief.

## Five

WHEN he was very small—before the *maladie du pays*, the inescapable languor that makes of the Andalucian a dreamer rather than a man of action, descended upon him—Juan had thought that the most beautiful thing in the world would be to be a guide to the Alhambra; now he was content to love its loveliness, to deliver himself to dreams in the shade of its patios, to nurse his nameless melancholy amid the music of its fountains, to invent whispers behind its lattices, and footfalls in its silent chambers, or, sometimes, to submerge his soul in orgiastic imaginings of the bloody deeds which had taken place within its walls. He had made friends with all the custodians and often managed by tactful means to accomplish an entrance without paying for the privilege.

The rose and orange of the towering walls, that sang like a note of music against the turquoise of the sky; the *morbidezza* which towards sunset gathers about the palace and hangs like a thundercloud upon its turrets; the light pure air of morning, in which the houses heaped upon the lower slopes of the hills fling back the sun in scales of mother-o'-pearl—found in Juan an ardent devotee. But sometimes all this beauty seemed to him false, deceptive, and vile, like a mask hiding the face of some unspeakably hideous monster. All the lust, betrayal, and terror of the ancient Alhambra reached him through its dust, and the rose of its walls seemed to him the colour of dried blood.

On his way up the Alhambra hill, Juan had paused upon a flat terrace, built over the dungeons where the Moors were

imprisoned at the coming of the Catholic kings. At this hour, when the rim of the sun had slipped behind the Sierras, and the last flame lay like a warrior's plume across the jealous peaks that fringed the horizon with ragged purple, the terrace was deserted. The first star trembled behind a screen of translucent jade; night poured on the eastward mountains like the juice of grapes.

Far below, the encircled plain, the dreaming Vega, steeped itself in its emerald gloom of dusk, and carried on its bosom the reflection of the timid stars. How many a time had Juan and Miguel surrendered themselves to the enchantment of this hour: when the scent of jasmine comes like a lover's sigh across the parapets; when the mountains, all save the Sierra Nevada, which, like a dying empress, carries by day and night the illumination of her snows, are blotted out in darkness; when the Vega stirs, dissolves into infinity, becomes an ocean of perilous desires, which ebbs and flows in its mysterious channels beyond the limits of human apprehension, peoples itself with an unearthly multitude from whose sunken cathedrals rises from time to time the chiming of innumerable bells; when all that is exquisite and melancholy, all the essence of the tragic beauty which is Granada floats like a veil across the endless sea; when the note of a guitar launches upon the silence a disembodied loveliness that drifts towards the moon; when the Alhambra broods, and *el ultimo suspiro del Moro* is in the air, and the words 'Granada! Granada!' rise like a prayer from adoring lips.

'Granada! Granada!' whispered Juan. His eyes were wet, but the tension of his mind and body had passed away. He sat upon the parapet, cuddling his knees, heedless of the drop below. Immortal peace lay on his soul. The lights of Granada, the balconies of Granada, her rejas, her gardens, her stumbling streets, her exquisite little hidden churches, her quiet patios, her rose-red walls, her saffron roofs, her chiming bells, wove themselves into an inarticulate poetic fabric that enfolded all the conscious part of Juan Díaz Marquez.

A little to the left the twin spires of the church of Nuestra Señora de las Angustias lifted themselves from the dusk; the

scaled, complicated roof of the cathedral lay away to the right. The sky was now the colour of the Virgen de las Angustias' robe; high up in heaven were a cluster of bright stars that formed themselves into the shape of a crown; below them, staring hard so that his eyes were dazzled, Juan saw the pale compassionate face with lifted brows; the strip of light above the horizon resolved itself into the recumbent Figure across knees wide enough to cradle the sorrow of the world. Juan felt himself drawn to those miraculous knees, sheltered beneath the folds of the miraculous robe. He felt as he felt when on Sundays he went into the blaze and dazzle of the church, which, when a little boy, he had truly believed to be an antechamber to Paradise itself. There was our Lady of Sorrows, hung up in the skies like a great star; holding out her hands as though to say, 'Come unto me and I will lead you by the hand into the very presence of God Himself!' And behind her, between the tall stalks of the candles, moved, half seen and half unseen, mystical figures of beings to whom all the secrets of her sanctuary were known.

He had twice been taken into that place behind the altar, where the great mantle of the Virgin hangs down from her dizzy height and the steps of the faithful are liable to be endangered by electric-light cables; where the superb theatricality of the suspended Figure is exposed to the detached and critical eye. Juan remembered his knees weakening, his mouth and tongue going dry. Inéz had taken him there to light a candle for some relation who was sick. He had almost swooned at his proximity to the Adored One, had scarcely dared to raise his eyes to the still pink and white profile. When the priest took his candle and went to set it among the rest on the great iron grille that backs the altar, Juan saw to his horror that there was no spike to receive it. But without the least hesitation the priest removed and quenched a candle which was burnt a third of the way down, and thrust Juan's in its place. And that in itself seemed a terrible thing to Juan: that the lighting of his candle should mean the extinguishing of another person's. He was overwhelmed with terror and compunction, and had a terrible longing to snatch



his own candle away; the thought that his own might be removed in the same way for a newcomer's filled him with despair. But Inéz was moving away; he wondered if it would be wrong to kneel down and kiss the lily-bordered velvet of the robe that fell from on high; but he did not quite dare.

Now, in the gathering dusk, he spread his arms out widely with clenched fists and whispered the prayer which had come into his mind.

'Blessed Virgin of the Sorrows, take from me my heart of a little rabbit and make a man of me! Help me to find my courage, that I may not have to go on living with the knowledge that I am a coward!'

The stars and the robe seemed to quiver, so that he held his breath. Soon it would be dark, and the thing he had pledged himself to do would become impossible. He turned to run up the hill.

When he reached the Alhambra through the darkling elms he found it deserted. The light ran over it like lilac water. His shout, echoing among the hollow walls, brought a friend.

'Let me go in for a minute, Pedro! Only for a minute.'

'There's no moon,' grumbled Pedro. 'How will you do if you meet the Moorish soldiers? I'll not come if you yell for me.'

'I won't yell! I only just want to go into the first courtyard—to look for a minute——'

'You'll get me into trouble before you've finished. You'll fall in one of the ponds and drown yourself, or you'll see a ghost and go mad.'

'What are you talking about? The son of El Bailarín does not go mad because he sees a ghost!' said Juan contemptuously. He felt a dampness as of dew gathering on his forehead as he passed into the darkness. He turned once, to see the tip of Pedro's cigarette glowing through the dusk of the outdoors. It was not yet fully dark out there, but inside the palace the lovely and the base were blotted out in a darkness as of cinerarias. Through barred windows twinkled the lights of the town; here water gleamed, like a patch of burnished steel, here a strip of

spangled sky canopied a cloistered space under whose black archways Juan did not venture. Who watched him from the galleries? What message sped in advance of him, to marshal those dim hosts that slumber in Alhambra dust?

Like a gazelle he sped from point to point, catching his breath at an unaccountable sound. The fountains were stilled, and a falling leaf from the orange-trees sounded crisp as a footstep. Once a fruit fell, with a dead *thump* as though someone had jumped down upon the soil. His heart rose in his throat, it hurt, like swallowing a crust of bread. Still Juan went on in pursuit of his courage, his pale, lovely courage that fled before him like a shaft of moonlight, like a slim naked Juan that tempted his fleshly counterpart deeper into the citadel of mortal fear.

The blood drummed in his ears. An archway loomed before him, black as a dragon's mouth. Dared he commit himself to that subterranean darkness which, vaguely disturbing by day, was terrible by night? The darkness was thickening every moment; he would be trapped in it unless he made haste.

The noise of his own sobbing breaths went with him down the uneven tunnel; he guided himself with the palms of his hands against ice-cold brickwork, and, when he emerged into a patio blackened with trees, his heart was beating to suffocation. A panting pause, and he turned to the left, groping for the steps he was seeking. A moment later, he stood, gasping and gulping the clear air, on an outer gallery; the comfort of the coloured sky, the comfort of the glittering lights of the town were his. A delicate, distant sound of singing came up from the valley to hearten him further, and a nightingale broke out, beneath the very walls about whose bases wreathed the blue smoke of the dusk. And all the ghosts of the Alhambra that had been inimical turned suddenly friendly: pressed close to him so that he could feel their tender bodies and their breath of bygone roses and the nard and cinnamon and myrrh that blew out of their garments. The drumming of the blood in his ears turned to a thin sound of trumpets, of an endless tune on strings that went on and on without beginning or end. . . .

He was in the little painted turret known as the Queen's Toilette. He could not see the small coloured ships, the panthers with their heads twisted across their shoulders, or the thin sprigs of fragile flowers. Beyond the low parapet the walls ran sheer into nothingness; one felt oneself suspended in air. Clutching one of the thin marble pillars, Juan forced himself to the edge, so that his knees pressed against the stonework. He felt them trembling. A slip, a moment of dizziness, and it would be quite finished. A dead leaf would go whirling down; a thing would accomplish itself. . . .

Across the valley, perched high on the bare hillside, were the clustered lights of the Sacro Monte; its square prison-like bulk had become part of the ambiguous colour of the earth. There was Miguel, his brother, his other self. Could one, by thinking, make another person think of one? He strained his mind in an effort of concentration. Miguel, my brother, think of me! Think of Juanito! Come to your window and rejoice with me in what I have found. I and my courage, hand in hand, we think of you. We are wishing you good night. We are blessing you. Life is only half life when you are not here.

A light in the Sacro Monte suddenly blinked, like a signal; went out. He drew a deep audible breath of satisfaction.

God, dear God, if I don't hurry, it will be altogether dark! He flung himself dangerously down the steps, holding himself, for all his speed, away from the parapet edge. Carefully on the stairs! And across the cobbled patio, where one might scratch one's eyes out on the orange-trees! And up the hell's mouth tunnel! To right or left? Steady; one must not let fear betray one now. A lantern flashed ahead; he flung himself towards it with a gulp. Pedro was shaking his shoulder.

'Never again! You lied to me! You said you were only going into the first court!'

Juan laughed; his body was soaked with sweat; he shook off Pedro's clasp, for fear the man should feel he was trembling.

'If one does not find what one looks for in the first court it is necessary to go on, to the second, and the third!' he cried tauntingly.

'Huh! You did not say you had lost something. Why didn't you say that before? Was it a love-letter? Ho-ho! I suppose that was it! A love-letter from your girl! *¡jesu!* When you're a bit older you won't make such a to-do about a single love-letter!'

Juan's laughter rang behind him as he ran down the alameda, where the taxis roared up and down; he was laughing for joy, for relief; he forgot his dignity and pranced and tossed his head, leaping backwards and forwards across the runnels that filled the green darkness with the sound of water.

'I *have* courage! I *have* courage!'

The lights of the Calle de Goméres filled the great gateway with a golden glow; he saw people moving about, heard the radio coming from an upper room; women were sitting on the balconies, lazily moving their fans. He felt as though he had travelled down several centuries. He greeted the almond-seller and the water-carrier with a gush of friendship, launched a piercing strain of that most detestable air, *Pajarito*, on the evening stillness—and arrived back at the Casa del Matador in high feather.

After he had eaten the supper which Felipa had kept for him, and sat like a pasha while she fomented a minute blister on one of his heels, he went to bed, forgetting his rendezvous with Tomás.

Next day, Tomás reminded him of it, but he was very nice when Juan said rather coolly that he had forgotten all about it.

'*Nada, nada,*' said Tomás. 'As a matter of fact, I couldn't have got off myself. We were very busy last night, and a crowd came in at eleven, and there was singing; your father was among them.'

But at an hour when Juan was sleeping, Don José sat in his office, thinking. He could not get the afternoon's incident in the lodge-keeper's house out of his mind. He chewed his thumbnail, and a deep crevice formed itself between his brows. Presently he got up, shrugging his shoulders, and said perfunctorily a prayer before the Virgin on the wall. After all,

it was wiser to omit nothing when one wished for a particular thing.

That next day, Juan found it necessary to remove himself out of sight of the sombreness of his father, in which he knew himself to be concerned. Don José had spoken no word to him of the previous day's ignominious happening, but it was not to be doubted that this was heavily in his mind. Secure for a whole week from his horror, Juan felt the impulse to fling his arms about his father's neck and cry:

'Father! I am *not* a coward. I went to the Alhambra last night—right in—when it was almost dark. Even Pedro dare not do that. He's frightened of the Abencerrage knights! I was brave like a lion. Father, I cannot bear that you should suffer because I am not brave. I will do anything you want. You can take me to Don Pascuale's ranch if you like, and I will—I will fight the young bulls. . . .'

That was what he longed to say; but he could not say this thing, the only thing which, he knew, would have brought Don José comfort. Many times this suggestion had been made, and on each occasion Juan had found a way of evading it; twice he had shamefully shammed sick, on another occasion he had earnestly implored his father to excuse him, as an examination was at hand and Don Antonio was not at all satisfied with his Latin. Finding out from Don Antonio that this was the exact truth, Don José had concurred.

He could not make himself say it. He could not, for all his love, give his father the thing he most desired. So he skulked about the house all day, and, when evening came, went up again to the terrace of the Alhambra, to receive the evening sacrament of beauty that the Vega bestows upon her lovers.

He had a great desire to make a poem and to sing it; unhappily his voice had broken, and he had not yet mastered the difficulties of metrical composition. He had in his mind some words which he intended to ask Don Antonio—himself no mean manipulator of the copla—to help him with: about living a little while and

then dying like a flower, upon the bosom of the country. That seemed to him a beautiful thought; unfortunately, his expression of it was too irregular to set to music. He hummed beneath his breath one of Don Antonio's soleares—written in the Andalus dialect which is so much richer than the Castilian—hearing in imagination the thrum of the guitar:

*'Anda ve y dile a tu ma're  
Que te tiene tan guarda  
. . . que yo te tuve en mis brazos  
parte de una madrugada.'*

A rustle in the trees close at hand made him start, and almost flung him over the parapet. He sat for a moment, clutching the stones which still held the warmth of the sun. Then he realized that he had an audience, and he instantly wanted to repeat his effect, if possible, more impressively than before. Alas, what can one do with a voice which betrays one, in one's most emotional moments, with odd squeaks into the treble, ridiculous rumblings in the bass? He dared only produce that thread of sound, which, however, carried well enough in the still air.

It was a girl, of course. One of the functions of girls, in Juan's dreams, was to listen to his poetry. He loved to imagine himself reciting his poems while a girl sat listening to him, her fan slowly beating the air—until the emotion of the poem, the fact that it was dedicated to herself, bent her head low on her bosom and the tears ran down her beautiful cheeks!

It might, of course, be Pilár. The garden of Pepe's betrothed ran right up to the end of the terrace on which Juan was sitting; its ancient mirador, netted with ivy, overlooked the very spot whence now he strained his eyes through the twilight. Oh, essence of romance!—to descry, in the archway of the mirador, the figure of Pilár, her pale oval face, her long dark hair, which Pepe had described to him. To Juan this as yet unknown sister-in-law to be was a lovely myth; he had only once or twice caught a glimpse of her as she drove from the cathedral with her grandmother. What would Bailarinito say, if he found out that

during his absence his young brother had been serenading his novia?

There could be no harm in it. A repetition of the rustle decided Juan. The solea he had just sung seemed, perhaps, a little outspoken for the occasion; hastily reviewing his repertory, he chose one discreet enough to satisfy even Bailarinito, had he been within earshot.

'*Te veo y no te puedo hablar*,' crooned Juan, much encouraged by repeated rustlings in the myrtles.

*'Te veo y no te puedo hablar  
Mira que triste es nuestra suerte que  
te veo y no te puedo hablar.'*

He brought his effort to an end with a creditable cadenza—the gift of the flamenco was born in him—and waited. Surely, if it were Pilár, she would give some sign? After a moment, he ventured to say quietly:

'Señorita . . .'

A large white cat, obviously enceinte, detached itself from the branches, dropped on the parapet, and ran, with a self-conscious gurgle, towards him.

He was so disgusted that, for all his affection for animals, he cuffed the beast. He rose with great dignity and brushed the earth off the seat of his trousers. Like Don José, he had no liking for the sentimental situation that turns farcical—particularly if the farce be at his own expense. With great deliberation, Juan drew a packet of canarios from his pocket, and lit one. The act of smoking, at fifteen, has still a curiously restorative effect upon one's *amour propre*.

## Six

**T**O PILÁR, the most unreal circumstance of her unreal life was her betrothal to Pepe Díaz.

The deaths of both her parents had flung a deep shadow across her childhood, which life at the Carmen de los Arrayanes did nothing to lift. She had never enjoyed any youthful society; all the friends of Doña Mercedes were old women, old dried-up duquesas and señoras, who filled the little reception room with their parrot screams; who quarrelled and cheated over cards, and filled the house so full of scandal that every piece of furniture, every fold of drapery, seemed to contain a whisper after they were gone. They looked at Pilár with dim, suggestive eyes, gloating upon her innocence, so soon to be destroyed in marriage. That was how they looked upon marriage, these foul old women. How they gathered, nodding and winking, at a wedding, which furnished them with the spectacle most dear to their corrupt old hearts—of a maiden about to be deflowered. They were altogether vile and horrible, these old women of distinguished or wealthy bourgeois families; but Pilár had not reached perception of their villainy. She wondered sometimes what their glances meant, why they burst into cackles or nudgings at a remark which seemed to her to hold no cause for laughter; she was puzzled when they wanted to stroke her, to lay their dry old flesh against hers, so youthful, so like warm velvet. The contact of their shrivelled fingers made her shrink a little, but she controlled herself because she believed that they meant to be kind.



When she first came to the Carmen de los Arrayanes, she had been obliged to sleep with her grandmother. How she had hated it!—had hated, in the night, to feel her grandmother's body pressing against her own, had loathed the embrace of her grandmother's arms and the contact she insisted upon, even during the hottest summer nights, when Pilár would have put a bolster between them to relieve them of the heat of each other's bodies.

All night long, when the child's eyelids were straining over her hot and beating eyes, the old woman's voice would go on; always it was of Pilár's father she talked, of that favoured son—the only one of her children with whom, at one time or another, she had not quarrelled bitterly. Endless anecdotes of his childhood, childish speeches which, even to the child Pilár, were without wit or significance, long accounts of how he would make wreaths of flowers to hang round his mother's neck on her birthdays. She never spoke of the son Pilár had known: of the father who had seemed to the little girl a very wonderful and all-important being; never of Pilár's mother, whom Doña Mercedes had bitterly disliked.

'You are my son's daughter,' she would mumble, stroking Pilár with the palm of her dry and feverish hand, 'and therefore you are my daughter. Through the gateway of my body he came into this world, bringing you with him, so you are my child as he was my child.' And then she would begin to recite the histories of her obstetric experiences, so that Pilár, only half understanding, was driven wild with terror. 'Don't tremble, my little one, don't tremble! It will be time enough for you to tremble when these experiences come to you. Blessed Virgin, you will know then what it means to be a woman. . . . And when you are older I will find you a husband, just as your father would have done for you if he had been alive. Ah, that will be an important thing, my little precious one! A good husband, handsome and with much money, so that you will never know what it is, after you are married, to set foot to the ground'—Pilár thought of how much she enjoyed running up on the hill with Maria and playing hide and seek among the prickly pears;

Doña Mercedes' words did not evoke a very agreeable vision—'and who will look after you so tenderly, as tenderly as your grandmother!'

Pilár always rose from such nights with a feeling of profound exhaustion, with dark circles beneath her eyes and a sodden feeling through her whole body; she had hardly the energy to drag herself about. And, by contrast, how nimble was Doña Mercedes! how fearfully, chatteringly energetic, with the energy which should by rights have been Pilár's, a child of seven years old!

Mercifully for the latter, a change took place when she was ten years old or thereabouts; Doña Mercedes' craziness took a deeper turn. She began to see in Pilár the woman she had detested, rather than the man she had loved. During this period Pilár was banished, not merely from her bed, but from her room. Pilár knelt beside her own bed and said three Hail Marys in thanksgiving on the night she was promoted to a chamber of her own. She had now her own bed, her own chamber, her own soul; she no longer woke in the night to a fearful caressing that froze her with terror, nor felt, as she lay limp in the grey tide of dawn, some formless demand from the figure curled in its hard shell of sleep at her side. She woke refreshed, her limbs lost their weakness of languor and her mind strengthened with her strengthening body; a dusk lay upon her spirit, but it was not the infernal dusk of her early years at the Carmen de los Arrayanes.

Strange to say, of the influences that moulded her adolescence, that of Doña Mercedes was the weakest. Doña Mercedes Borrás had gone on bearing children until she was nearer fifty than forty, and all of them were dead, save one son, who was a rake and lived somewhere near Zaragoza. From the son in Zaragoza, Doña Mercedes apparently never heard; nor was he ever mentioned. Pilár's father was the youngest of Doña Mercedes children, and it may have been the great gap of age that lay between them—greater than the usual gap between grandparents and their grandchildren—that weakened her hold upon the mind of Pilár. Neither was Pilár, as she began to develop a character of her

own, the type of child to appeal greatly to Doña Mercédes; she was too simple, her immaturity too prolonged, and the mystical side of her character, which she inherited from her mother, too much in evidence. Doña Mercédes got the girl a dueña and hoped for the best; she shrugged her shoulders upon the mysticism. Her own duties towards the girl were entirely comprised in finding her a husband, and hardly a day passed but she harped upon this topic until it ceased to have any interest or significance for Pilár herself; it was just a natural part of growing up, like lengthening one's dresses and pinning up one's hair. Pilár was good, respectful, truthful, and obedient; it is conceivable that the old woman would have appreciated a granddaughter who was none of these things.

Her childhood would have been more dreary than it actually was, had it not been for Maria. Maria it was who, at the Santa Cruz, ferreted out a large green comb and fixed it, with a bunch of carnations, in the child's silky hair; it was she who taught Pilár to prance a little, solemnly, and sang the Andalucian folk songs so often that, by the time she was ten, Pilár knew most of them as well as Maria.

Maria had been in the service of Doña Mercédes for twenty years. She was the only one of the servants who had sufficient sense of proportion to bear with the old woman's frequent accusations of theft, her screaming fits of passion, the insults she broadcast during her 'bad' moods.

Maria was small and round and gay as a lark. Her face bore hardly a wrinkle, her skin had the lovely golden smoothness of cream, and her eyes had a wild and reckless flight that enchanted everyone save Doña Mercédes. Since coming to the Carmen de los Arrayánes she had married Andrea the gardener, had a couple of babies under Doña Mercédes' roof, and, two years after Andrea's ignoble departure from Granada with another woman, had shamelessly produced a third, about whose fatherhood she was perversely uncertain. Her instinct for reproduction apparently satisfied by the last adventure, she settled down and behaved herself, but her unquenchable frivolity, the merry

lewdness of her conversation, were the uncertain sunlight upon Pilár's days.

But even Maria's levity lit but a pale gleam of answering light in her serious little face, although all the positive emotion which her life contained, apart from her religious experience, derived through Maria, whom she loved in a secret, controlled, yet passionate manner, allowing none of her feelings to escape in natural childish outbursts.

With the oncoming of puberty, a state whose significance Maria took it upon herself to explain with precision to Pilár, she became even graver, slower, more economical in her words and actions.

The reason for this, which she revealed to no one, was the growth within her of something that can only be described as mystical awareness: a deep disturbing consciousness of a world beyond that in which she actually moved. The footsteps in the night, by which the house was indubitably haunted, stood to Pilár for the feet of angels, for ever on the point of bringing her some message by which she was to direct her life. As little afraid as Doña Mercedes, she would sit upright in bed, pressing her hands over her childish breasts, breathing a half-audible prayer: 'Come, Lord Jesus, come! Come, blessed Angel of the Annunciation, come to my prepared heart and tell me what I am to do!' But the footsteps never crossed her threshold, although, on one occasion, between the bottom of the door and the sagging flooring, she believed she had seen a light, a delicate, greenish, supernatural light. These experiences of hers were half the deliberate and self-induced fantasies of adolescent maidenhood, and half the outcome of the mystical receptiveness into which, encouraged by her confessor, she worked herself; and always they were the results of her loneliness, her lack of normal healthy occupation.

Like many a young religious, she adored the thought of martyrdom; and, on one occasion, Maria, bursting into the room with clean linen under her arm, came upon Pilár, standing stark naked in the middle of the floor, with eyes closed and hands

pressed palm to palm between her breasts. She had taken the petals of a crimson rose, and, moistening them in her mouth, had planted them, one between her brows, one over each of her breasts. They stood for wounds, wounds received in the service of her Lord, the blessed Jesus Christ. Pilár Borrás, blessed martyr. To the gay, earthly Maria they suggested other ideas.

*'Santa Maria!* If the caballero who leans over the wall could see you now, my pretty——! Ay-ay, what a sleepless night he'd have; the blessed saints themselves know who'd get the benefit of it!' The rose-petals fell, as Pilár made a quick movement of instinctive modesty. 'Now, now. No need to be shy of me, that's seen you naked many a dozen times. Holy Mother of our Lord, you're ripening like a bunch of sweet Almería grapes!' Dropping her linen upon the brick floor, the indefatigable Maria snatched another rose from the jar on Pilár's chest of drawers, thrust it between the girl's lips, and stood back, head on one side, to observe the effect. But in some way the symbol of supreme coquetry did not accord with the pale, remote beauty that was Pilár's. Quick to sense the incongruity, Maria snatched the rose away, putting it between her own lips, cocking her shameless head, and stroking the hips which, alas, had masked their youthful grace in the encroaching fat. She burst into light-hearted laughter.

'The idea of it! An old woman like me! An old sheep pretending to be a young lamb. The señora would say I should be ashamed of myself!'

While she tossed the clean linen upon Pilár's bed she went on with her chatter. Pilár, slowly dressing herself behind Maria's back, listened attentively. Side by side with her piety ran a liking for Maria's tales, which to her were as unreal as legends, harmless as Maria was harmless, merry as she was merry. During this period of her life, Pilár might have been wooed to merriment if there had been anyone who so cared to woo her.

'Señorita, would you believe it?—that Modeste's at her tricks again. This time it's Alfonso the water-carrier's son. You'd think she'd have learnt her lesson, with twins her grandmother looks

after in the Albaicin. But she's not the one to learn by her misfortunes. I'm a fine one to talk, aren't I?' Maria was always cheerfully shameless about her own fall from grace. 'Ay-ay, it's so nice when a man is kind to you, and there isn't much a woman can do, except *that*, to show she likes being made a fuss of.'

'Ay-ay,' said Pilár solemnly, brushing the long, silken tangle of her hair.

'Ay-ay, that poor Vittoria! You don't know how she looked when they pulled her out of the river. Her hair hung down just like a mantilla and her eyes looked like dead fish—all the colour had been washed out of them. But I dare say that was with weeping before she went in. He wouldn't look at her—how could he with his wife waiting round the corner for him with a butcher's knife? She said she'd cut him open from here to here if she caught them at it.'

Sometimes Maria's tales were frankly scandalous.

'If you'd heard what they said when she turned up in a new shawl, with red heels to her shoes! *Santa Maria!* If a woman hasn't a right to what she earns for making herself pleasant to the señores, the way Lucia did——!'

Maria's revelations gave Pilár her only outlook on a world as remote and brightly coloured as a fairy-tale: a world that both fascinated and alarmed her with its contrast to her own silver-grey existence.

'Do people, when they are in love, always behave like that?'

'Some do one way, some another,' said Maria, with unwonted discretion. 'All men want the same thing when it comes to the point. Of course, it is very, very wicked to give it to them,' said Maria, with portentous waggings of her head, 'unless one is married or betrothed. Look what happened to me! I should have been in a nice way if it hadn't been for the señora. But, ay-ay, it is so nice! And when you are sure of your young man it's all right, of course.'

'But isn't it—a bit frightening?'

'Frightening! *Santa Maria*, what an idea! Still, if it was frightening or not, I suppose you'd have to do it. It's funny;

something seems to come behind you and give you a push, and before you know what's happening to you, there you are, lying on the grass. . . . You're best behind rejas,' concluded Maria, 'but you miss a lot.'

'But can it happen to anybody? At any time?' breathed Pilár, her wide eyes shining with a feverish excitement.

'At any time, unless your blessed guardian angel has his eye on you. Even the Hail, Mary isn't much good, I've found, when it comes to the point,' admitted Maria.

That on the one side; on the other, her governess and dueña—the señorita who gave her her lessons in history and geography, who made her sew long pieces of altar-linen and tried to combine social training (to what end?—the girl never went out) with a hundred desiccated moral counsels:

'You must never look at a man; at least, you must never let him see you looking at him. Cover your eyes quick—that's what the fan is for; if one wishes to give a little encouragement, it is always permissible to peep round the side. What is the world coming to in these days, when men aren't kept in their proper places on the far side of the reja, but come right into the house?'

Pilár had not the least conception that the type of training she was receiving was superannuated, even in Spain, where tradition dies hard and few women desire emancipation.

And there was Don Felipe, a man who walked with his feet on earth and his head among the stars—recapitulating, in his thread-like voice, histories of Christian heroisms and saintly visions that inflamed the girl's imagination equally with the tales told to her by Maria.

'Let us meditate to-day, my daughter, upon the blessing and favour of persecution; why God so loves certain of His children that He sends upon them the sacred sign of His afflictions; upon the virtue of suffering and the holy message it carries to the ungodly. . . .'

Between these various teachings, it is to be wondered that the girl did not become crazy. She was surrounded by unreality; she was a Belle au Bois Dormant whose sleep was troubled by

rumours of an outer world with which she never came in contact. Her religion offered to Pilár by far the most vital and authentic experiences. Solitude, bolts, bars, and locks formed no barrier to the angelic visitants who but waited to reveal themselves until her soul was prepared. The strong vein of mysticism that governed her thoughts descended to Pilár through her mother, the woman whom Doña Mercédes so much disliked; and this, added to the sincere although naïve nobility of her character, made of her a natural victim, if one may so put it, of the occult.

Perhaps, too, this mysticism flowing in her veins had thinned down the natural sap of her youth and beauty. Her temperament was of the type called 'cold' by those who are incapable of understanding how such a nature can, under the proper stimulus, kindle to white flame. She had, perhaps, an abnormal sensual unconsciousness; she was unable truly to visualize the acts which Maria described to her, save in a fashion which robbed them of all connection with the human beings whom she intimately knew. They aroused no heat in her, although sometimes, when Maria waxed too explicit, she felt a spiritual shrinking in no way connected with shame, but rather with the fear and dread of having to submit to such things herself. Thanks to those grisly experiences of her childhood, she hated being touched; to be handled was unthinkable. The sex act itself, which, thanks to Maria, she perfectly understood, represented to Pilár an act of supreme sacrifice to which, when in love, a woman submitted, and which marked her complete surrender to her lover's personality. That there could be any pleasure in it seemed to her, in spite of Maria's assurances, grotesque.

Such a girl presented to Pepe Díaz a problem which he never perceived, much less attempted to solve. But before Pilár met Pepe a thing occurred which delivered her more completely than ever to her mystic influences. Maria was killed.

So sharp, so brutal a death to overtake so harmless a creature. Crossing the Plaza Nueva, with a market-basket on her arm, she paused midway to fling back one of her irresistible jests to an acquaintance on the farther pavement; a car swinging out of the



Calle de Goméres caught her and brought her songs and her stories to an end.

Pilár was first stunned, then almost insane with grief. 'God! I must find God!' It was the first coherent thought that came to her out of her suffering. Nothing in the world was left to her save her religion.

The señorita, herself a devout Catholic, wearied of the number of times she was required by Pilár to descend the steep Alhambra hill and visit the cathedral, which the girl chose in preference to the church of the Alhambra. She had always loved the Botticellian figure of the Virgen de la Antigua, under her draped canopy of beaten gold; at her feet alone peace might be found and her soul strengthened for its ordeal of solitude.

Doña Mercedes ignored the state of affairs, as well as she was able; to her, Pilár's access of religious fervour was a sign that the girl required to be married. She was growing pale and thin with her hours of kneeling before images; something must be done soon, unless she was to look like a nun. And there were other urgent reasons why Doña Mercedes was anxious to settle the future of her grand-daughter.

Day after day she visited the cathedral, sometimes two or even three times; and on Sundays drove down with her grandmother to mass. It was on one of these occasions that she saw Pepe Díaz.

Or, rather, that Pepe Díaz saw her.

Pepe had, as a concession to a faith of which he thought as little as most young men of his type, accompanied his father to mass. He was kneeling behind his chair, hoping that his new trousers were not suffering, when he saw before him the face of a girl, and straightway forgot about his trousers and all save the beauty of Pilár Borrás.

She too was kneeling, clasping her rosary; her face was too composed to appear ecstatic, although she was obviously blind and deaf to all save the mass itself. She was, had Pepe but known it, living more vividly than she did in any other place, although all about her was as calm and sculptural as the towering figure

of the Virgin on her left. Pepe's eyes snatched a brief impression of her companion, and he knew instantly who she was.

His objective dawned there and then before his eyes. He knew, as everyone in Granada knew, about Doña Mercedes Borrás's fortune: it seemed too much that she should possess, into the bargain, so divine a grand-daughter.

His eyes took possession of her in a fashion no maiden could have ignored, had she not been absorbed in her devotions. The pale, saintly oval of her face, framed in the black lace of her mantilla, her eyes which were like silver coins slipped under the half-moons of her heavy eyelids, her hair which the mantilla revealed above her brow in a wing of satin as black as the lace which covered it, raised both sacred and profane desires in the heart of Pepe Díaz. The girl with the eyes of silver, thought Pepe, who had his poetical moments. The epithet seemed to strike in itself a note of good fortune.

When the occupants of the Carmen de los Arrayanes came out of the cathedral, Pepe was there to catch the eye of Pilár. Other advance he dared not risk, in view of the strict ceremonial of the country, and the seriousness of his own intentions; and in this he failed, for Pilár, encompassed by her heavenly host, did not see him, although her thin black gown actually brushed him in passing. She was, unfortunately for Pepe Díaz, not aware of the tall, rakish young man, who stood with one hand planted on his hip in a manner to display to its best advantage the diamond ring (borrowed from his father) which he wore on his middle finger, or the stylish cut of a striped suit of grey and black, or the killing slant of a new hat purchased from Lagartijo Chico at 'Old England'.

It was not for several days that she became aware of his existence, although no day passed without Pepe's vigil at the same hour of the morning, outside the house.

Her bedroom was at the side of the house, facing the sierra, and receiving the full splendour of the sunrise, the inimitable sunrise of Granada, when the last lingering stars are caught, like dawn dancers, in a flood of rose; when such clarion notes

of colour fill the horizon that the very air seems vocal with their symphonies of crimson on flame and gold on saffron; when the great vault of the sky rings with a clamour of brazen and copper instruments and day comes like a conqueror across the unconquered snows. Summer though it was, Pilár could not bear to shut out a moment of that magnificence, but it was necessary, as soon as she arose, to lower the tattered reed blind which held out the heat of the sun. On three successive mornings, Pepe watched her doing this, before she became aware of him.

The cypresses pointed their long, dark fingers at a sky of burning, kingfisher blue; the silver tip of the Sierra Nevada overlooked their motionless spires. Pilár's fingers were busy with the cord of the blind, her lips with the Hail, Mary she invariably addressed to this outer loveliness; yet some divided consciousness drew her eyes to the terrace which overlooked the vegetable garden. Leaning upon the wall she saw a young man whose eyes, fixed upon her face, carried a message which Maria would have interpreted to her, had she been there to do so. But Pilár's mind in these days was filled with saints and martyrs; she had forgotten Maria's older wisdom. She returned the look with calmness, completed her task, and, as the reed curtain fell, knelt upon the floor and began her devotions.

The next morning he was there, and the next, and the next. Some faint stirrings of curiosity came to trouble Pilár's spiritual abstraction. She now flung a shawl across her nightgown before venturing to the window; her hair, in two long plaits of dark silk, fell across its embroidered amber and mingled with the knotted fringe. She would have been shocked by the suggestion that she put on this shawl to attract his admiration, but for the first time she looked at Pepe Díaz to find out what he was like.

She saw a young man with a serious face but reckless eyes which reminded her of Maria's. She could think now of Maria without pain. He had black hair, very sleek, like her own, and carried his head at an impudent angle. As convention required,

he gave no sign or acknowledgment of her observation, continuing to stare downwards, with imperturbable gravity, from the upper terrace.

She lingered over the cord that morning, and let the blind down slowly, inch by inch. For once, the natural instinct of girlhood had its way with her, for all her piety. She meditated upon the grave fact that she had an admirer, and wondered how she could find out who he was. She said a prayer for him—and dismissed him from her mind.

In the meanwhile an interview took place which, seemingly, satisfied Gomez and Don José Díaz Marquez. Doña Mercedes' lawyer came over from Madrid, and there was a long serious interview in Gomez's office. He brought with him a number of portentous documents in which even the astute Gomez could find no flaw. The Madrid lawyer assumed towards Gomez the attitude that a metropolitan professional man usually assumes towards the provincial, but Gomez was too hard-boiled to make much of that. Neither he nor Don José cared personally for the individual with highly polished nails, with a small Frenchified beard and an ostentatious taste in neckwear, who represented Doña Mercedes' interests, but both realised that it was no part of the business in hand that they should take a personal fancy to the person who represented the other side.

This individual, using a toothpick, acknowledged Doña Mercedes' eccentricity. She had a passion for money; she had been terrified that the Republican Government would take it from her. Even before her husband's death she had had a bee in her bonnet about Spain's going Republic; everyone had laughed at her. And now it was her privilege to laugh at them! The money had been very cleverly invested: the Republic had certainly got a little of it—here followed details; to do him justice, the man from Madrid made no bones about laying his cards on the table—but, taking one thing with another, the old lady could very well afford, if she chose, to take an important house in Madrid, acquire an entourage, and live in a manner becoming her ante-

cedents. Her devotion to her grand-daughter had, no doubt, something to do with it; her mind had fastened upon the idea of leaving the señorita a handsome dowry—and so forth.

Something was signed; the man from Madrid undertook to obtain Doña Mercedes' signature within forty-eight hours—and the matter was complete.

Pilár's curious courtship began, which ended, a month later, in Bailarinito's formally requesting her hand in marriage. Quick work; but he was sick of preliminaries, of hanging round the Carmen de los Arrayánes, playing cards with the two elder women, with the silver discs of Pilár's eyes piercing him from the gloom of the alcove at the farther end of the room. Unlike his father, Pepe did not care for refined society; he was more at home in the cafés and wine-shops than in the house of Doña Mercedes. It was not at all his notion of wooing a girl. Whispered conversations through a reja, vows exchanged through the iron scrolled work of the grille, in all the seclusion and privacy of dusk, constituted his idea of a courtship, and unfortunately, from an architectural point of view, the Carmen de los Arrayánes did not lend itself to the usual procedure; the windows, with their rejas, looked out across the valley; on the only side of the house approachable by visitors there were but two tiny windows, and these set too high to favour lovers' vows. So Pepe had to make the best of Doña Mercedes dining-room, where he writhed under the eyes of the old woman and the dueña, but, on the whole, behaved himself fairly well. After all, one must be prepared to sacrifice something for the chance of capturing an heiress. He felt, however, that he would rather a thousand times face an angry bull with his back to the barrera than go through this social torment a moment longer than it was necessary.

They had not, of course, the remotest chance of getting to know one another; for, in accordance with Spanish etiquette, they were never alone for a moment. There could be no conversation, save on the most stilted and formal lines.

Pilár, who had never known a man save Don Felipe, was utterly baffled by Pepe. Everything about him was strange to

her, and infinitely disturbing; his strong, aggressive masculinity, the exotic perfume with which he drenched his clothes before paying these formal calls, the hairiness of his wrists, upon the left one of which he wore a heavy gold bangle, his deep voice, the nervous speed at which he spoke, his bold insinuating glances, pointed by the upward flicker of his brows, his occasional lapses into the dialect, which made the señorita elevate her nose. Pepe himself was not unlike a bull, puzzled by its captivity, but still of peaceable intent. When he asked her to marry him—which he did, stammeringly, under the very nose of Doña Mercedes herself, who swung and fanned herself in her rocking-chair, whose ancient springs screeched a mocking commentary on the situation throughout Pepe's proposal—she had not the smallest idea whether she liked him or not; he simply represented an unknown quantity, man, to her. She had her orders from Doña Mercedes, and, so complete had been her training in obedience, it never occurred to her to disregard them. She accepted him, because there was no question of her doing anything else. She thought vaguely that she preferred his father, but was willing to be persuaded otherwise. The knowledge that Don José was a member of the household to which she was to belong carried with it an illogical reassurance; she herself perceived its illogicality, for why should she feel reassured by a man whom she knew as little as she knew Pepe?

On his side, Pepe, as we have seen, perceived nothing of the strange atmosphere which his father had discovered in connection with Pilár. He saw only her beauty; he thought, mainly, of her wealth; he was impatient for the day when these two things should fall into his hands.

The lameness of Doña Mercedes gave them a chance or two which otherwise they might not have captured. The three of them were sitting upon the terrace one evening, Pepe upright and ill at ease, Pilár perched on the parapet, and Doña Mercedes dozing between the two of them. Pilár's eyes were fixed upon the purple dusk which mounted like an essence from the lower terraces to them, still bathed in the frail green light of after-

sunset. Her thoughts were calm and unconscious, as they had been ever since her betrothal to Pepe; marriage seemed immeasurably far away. She was thinking of the cathedral, where she would rather have been than in her present situation. Lately she had given less time to her meditations; how was that?

'You've never shown me your garden,' said Pepe desperately. She sent a surprised glance through the dark fringe of her lashes.

'But Grandmother Mercédes cannot walk.'

Pepe bit his lip, with one eye on the grudging profile of the old woman; it nodded grimly.

'To the wall and back,' she gave sanction. So short a distance did not leave much opportunity for misbehaviour; and if the girl was scared she would certainly call out.

Pilár and Pepe, when they found themselves alone for the first time, were terrified. The branches of the trees which they had to lift aside as they passed along the narrow walks swished mockingly into their silence.

'There's an old Moorish bath,' broke out Pilár. 'And—and a mirador; but bits of it fall down.'

Pepe brushed such evasions aside.

'Do you love me?' he demanded brusquely, with difficulty keeping his hands off Pilár's forbidden body.

'I do not know,' she replied, with sincerity. 'I do not think so. I love the Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin. I have never known a man before. I think I am afraid of you. I do not know what to do when I am alone with you.'

'When shall we be married?' he urged, having, in his egotism so like his father's, no word of comfort for her. Her acknowledgment that she feared him fired his desire for her.

'My grandmother says, not until I am eighteen.'

'How long is that?' he asked, breathing heavily.

'I have only just had my seventeenth birthday,' she told him, with a coolness that was a match to his gunpowder. Disregarding the risks he ran, he flung his arms about her, and bound her to him with a lustful kiss. He kept his mouth on hers until the

out. He 'promised himself he would be kind to her, and, if Providence put more opportunities in his way, would keep himself in hand; to-night, if she were a little more human, he could tell her how his nerves were tearing him to bits, how getting her alone like that had broken him to pieces; but she would not understand. A wave of self-pity swept Pepe. Well, after the birth of a child or two she would very likely be different. But who would have thought, to look at her, she would be so chilly?

Doña Mercedes cocked an old bleared eye of wanton wisdom at her grand-daughter. She imagined she knew what had occurred: no doubt he had kissed her. Well, they were betrothed; and there was no harm in whetting a lover's fancy when all was properly arranged. She had to see the girl settled before she could comfortably loosen her tenuous hold of life, and it was better not to waste time in looking round. This had come very pat to hand.

But she received a surprise when she and her grand-daughter sat over the remains of their scanty supper in the dining-room. The unshaded light sent a white glare down on the dingy cloth, and carved shadows into even the young, unlined face of Pilár. Doña Mercedes nodded and dribbled over the wine she was strictly forbidden to touch. It was worth while shortening life by a year if only for an hour or two one could revive old fires damped down by weakness and by relentless time. Pilár was peeling a small, sour orange, gathered from one of their trees.

Like many old people, Doña Mercedes experienced an access of vigour towards night. Her brain cleared itself of its cobwebs; she was capable of sensible and even prolonged conversation and often wished that she had someone older and more worldly than Pilár to talk to; someone with whom to be indiscreet and a little scurrilous, someone who did not require her to dot her i's and cross her t's, who could take an elliptical allusion and toss it back to her. Her talk at night was often a monologue, conducted between the periods of munching the food she ate greedily at this hour of the day, while her eyes blinked past Pilár into some setting of her married days.



'Grandmother Mercédes, why is marriage ordained; since neither our Lord Jesus Christ nor the Blessed Virgin Mary were married?'

The wine spilt itself from the glass in Doña Mercédes greedy hand; she had overfilled her glass, so that the red wine trickled down upon her old veined hand; it gave her pleasure to feel and to see the wine upon her hand. Her brain, occupied in other matters, came back with difficulty to what Pilár was saying. For an instant she stared vacantly, with dropping lip; then that strangely capricious brain executed one of its unaccountable tricks of co-ordination. She remembered the incident in the garden and chuckled.

'So Pepe Díaz has given you a scare, has he, little fish, little pigeon? Has he? That won't do you any harm, so long as it teaches you men aren't to be trusted, any more than tigers, unless they're behind bars.'

'When we were standing beside the bath,' said Pilár, choosing her words carefully, 'I saw in the air, hanging above his head, a little flame, shaped like a spear, upside down; it was red—or purple: I can't tell which. A *bad* colour——'

'*Ave Maria Purísima!*' croaked Doña Mercédes, crossing herself with a piece of bread which she had sopped in her wine. 'Don't talk rubbish. It is high time you were married. The Virgin Mary—that was all very well, because everybody believed that story about the angel; but you'd soon find out in these days people aren't ready to accept so simple—so simple an explanation.'

'Do you think Pepe is wicked?' asked Pilár, on whom this was lost. Doña Mercédes wagged her head.

'All young men are wicked. Nothing male is good—except my little dog Chico. Where are you, Chico—Chico? Tell me, aren't you as good as bread, my little honeycomb—my pet? All young men are wicked,' she said, reverting to her previous subject. 'We just have to put up with it, and pray to God they'll behave themselves inside the house! Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't. It's like the wag of a pendulum; if it goes far one

way it will go far the other. Tick-tock, my love's like a clock! The better he is, the worse he'll be. The wife's got a lot to do with it. It will be your duty to make your husband just what you want him to be. And remember, it's better to keep him nicely swinging in the middle than to push him too far one way or the other.'

'Then I shall have to pray continually,' said Pilár seriously. Doña Mercédes began to cackle, swinging her body from side to side in her chair; there was a great mess of bread and wine in front of her.

'Don't get into the way of thinking prayer's going to do everything for you. . . . There are other things as well, and when you're married you'll find out about those. . . . Prayer is a good thing in its way, but a man doesn't take kindly to prayer when it gets in the way of his pleasures.' She turned a little maudlin, leaning across the table to pat Pilár's hand. 'My little nun! My spotless white lily! Pray as much as you like, but don't let your husband catch you at it. It checks his natural instincts,' said Doña Mercédes slowly; 'and checked instincts are responsible for a number of very unpleasant things.'

These remarks were as Greek to Pilár, who went on splitting her peeled orange into cloves. Vast difficulties were stirring in the back of her mind; she wondered how to give them expression. Prayer was the most important thing in her life; she could not see how she was to exist without it, or even how to keep it so much in the background that Pepe should not be aware of it. She was certain that in her marriage she would require all the spiritual support her prayers could give her. She had already visualized her own gradual martyrdom, the submission of her body to a husband's will, while her soul gathered strength for its apotheosis through mystical communion with the saints, who, to Pilár, were more real than any human being. She must not draw back, that she saw clearly, from this martyrdom; it was the will of all those who guarded her temporal being. Why, even her uncle at Zaragoza, whom she had never seen, had written about it! Doña Mercédes had told her about the letter, which

strangely—for, as a rule, Pilár had to read her correspondence for her—she had kept to herself.

‘The betrothal of Pilár to Pepe Díaz is a very satisfactory thing,’ he had written. ‘You have done very well to accomplish it.’ It was the first time that Pilár had ever heard the name of her uncle at Zaragoza; it seemed curiously impressive that a total stranger should write thus to approve her betrothal.

‘If I were not married——’ she began, hardly aware of how she meant to complete the sentence.

‘Do not be so stupid. Do you want to stay here by yourself when I’m dead?’ snapped Doña Mercédes. ‘Do you like dust and spiders and broken pots?’

‘Why, no, not particularly, Grandmother Mercédes!’ said Pilár, astonished to think that her grandmother had noticed such things, of which she had believed she was oblivious.

‘Why, no!’ mimicked the old woman. ‘No! You do not like them. But I do.’ A thick defiance rang in the harsh, unnaturally loud voice of Doña Mercédes. The impediment had cleared itself out of her speech, as it usually did when she was a little drunk. ‘I like them because they are old, and they are a part of old age, like myself. What do I want with scrubbed floors and new paint and fresh linen? What have those things got to do with corruption, like the corruption in my own body?’

‘Fleshly corruption is of little account,’ said Pilár, gravely voicing the opinions of Don Felipe, ‘beside the soul’s immortality.’ With the juice of an orange running out upon her chin she looked like a wise baby.

‘That’s all you know about it. They say my mind’s gone. Well—with my mind I can hang tapestries on these walls and carpet these floors with the finest carpets; I can have marble instead of brick, and when I clap my hands twenty servants can come to learn my bidding. My mind’s—my mind’s as good as yours or any other person’s,’ muttered Doña Mercédes, lapsing momentarily into a stupor.

‘Grandmother, you know the doctor has forbidden you to take so much wine,’ said Pilár gently.

“Without bread or wine, love grows cold,”’ quoted Doña Mercedes dimly, reaching again towards the carafe. This time the wine flowed freely upon the cloth and she sat looking down at it as though for a moment she saw the ugly helplessness of old age.

‘I’ll get a cloth,’ said Pilár, half rising.

‘Sit down. You needn’t look at me as if I was headed straight for purgatory,’ said Doña Mercedes crossly; weakness had passed and another vivid flash of understanding was illuminating her brain. ‘I dare say I’ll die fortified by the same rites as other people, and you will have to pay for masses for the repose of my soul. But the state of my body is just now a great deal more important to me than the state of my soul, which will be seen to hereafter. . . .

‘I see a torn curtain and it comforts me, because I myself am torn; I see a broken shutter and am glad, because I am broken; a spider spinning its web reminds me of a place waiting for me at the top of the hill where spiders have long been spinning the silk on which my bones shall rest tenderly. And, when I’m dead, do you want to stay up here all by yourself, watching decay going on all round you until one day you discover its fingers are laid on you?’

‘No; no,’ muttered Pilár.

‘No! Then what would you do about it?’ taunted Doña Mercedes.

‘I do not know; I have not thought about it. You always said you would find me a husband. Perhaps I should teach children to sew—in one of the convent schools.’

‘Are you crazy? The Republic says there will be no convent schools by the end of the year.’

‘Or I could—I could help Don Felipe to write out the chapters of his book about the saints; I could perhaps do writing for a number of people. I could write letters for them—there must be things I could do.’

‘Instead of which you are going to marry a handsome young man whom all the girls will envy you! You ought to be thanking

the Blessed Virgin Mary for it; for, unless you are out of your mind, you know very well there would be nothing for you but starvation, unless the convent took care of you.'

'Oh, it would, Grandmother Mercédes! I know it would!'

'I suppose you think the convent always comes to the rescue of girls who are left alone in the world without the price of a dowry? How would you like to be rich?' she shot at her granddaughter suddenly.

'Rich?' echoed Pilár wonderingly, as though the thought had never occurred to her. 'I don't know. What do people do with money?'

'Buy husbands,' retorted Doña Mercédes brutally.

'Buy husbands? I thought——'

'Ay-ay-ay,' said the old woman, with mockingly simulated astonishment. 'I suppose you have as many wits as the next one? Or perhaps you think a girl has only to be pretty and virtuous to get herself a good husband? Perhaps you think that virtue alone will get you into a convent? You are wrong, my little pearl. Nothing on this earth is to be had without money, and there is no place on earth for the penniless. What would you say if I tell you that when I die, unless you marry Pepe Díaz, you will have nothing to do except become a servant, or sit, like the blind beggar at the bottom of the hill, entreating foreigners to give you centimos?'

Instinctive horror overspread Pilár's face; she sat staring at her grandmother, the silver discs of her eyes swimming on the pale blue enamel of the eyeball; but slowly a calm descended upon her troubled features; she clasped her hands between her breasts and said,

'If it were God's will, He would help me to bear it.'

'What a saint! What an angel!' cried Doña Mercédes. 'It is a thousand pities Don José Díaz is not here to hear you say it. He is old enough to appreciate a thing like that, but I doubt your sweetheart understanding it. . . . Well, you see it happens not to be God's will at all. I have found you a husband; and, when I die, you will be looked after as well as you are now. And a lot of thanks I get for it.'

'I am grateful to you, Grandmother Mercedes; I do not deserve all you have done for me,' murmured the girl sincerely.

'There are plenty of things in marriage,' said the old woman more kindly, 'that a girl pretends to dislike, if she is properly brought up. Young men are ardent, and you are not accustomed to them. How should you be? But you are a woman, and, since you are my grand-daughter, you cannot be altogether silly.

'And bear this in mind; if a woman wants to keep her husband, she must be always at his disposal. There may be some would advise you otherwise, but you would do well to take my version before theirs. A man doesn't want to find his wife on her knees when he's in a mood for other things. Don't get into the way of saying "No" when he says "Yes."'

'I know it is my duty to obey,' stammered Pilár.

'Duty, duty; it's like a bottle of wine when you've left the stopper off. Piety is all very well in a virgin; but a wife who neglects her husband, to keep running into church, is a fool. If you can't manage to slip in a Hail, Mary here and there without letting him know about it, you're a bigger zany than I imagine.'

The burst of vigour which had inspired the old woman's latter pronouncements was dying like a guttering flame. The wild, baffled, and disturbed look to which Pilár was accustomed, and which stirred her pity for her grandmother, was breaking up the stillness of her face, and the dull flush of a purple plum was appearing on either cheek.

'I'm too old to be impressed by priests' jargon. I've lived my life and I know what I think about it. . . . I've got my own notion about what comes hereafter, and I haven't interfered with yours. Don Felipe has nothing to complain about. Our Lord Jesus Christ will look after an old woman who has had many sons. . . . Perhaps I'll go and burn a candle to-morrow. God Almighty isn't going to make trouble over an old woman who will soon appear to answer for her sins. I'll answer for the lot of them—with the Blessed Virgin beside me to see I don't forget anything.

'I dare say Don Felipe thinks it's my duty to make a nun of you. I know where my duty lies, and it isn't to Don Felipe. Your father was my son, the only one of the lot I cared for; and I've done what he would have wished me to do. Not, perhaps, as he would have done it; but everyone has their own way of making a tortilla.

'I told you there was nothing on earth to be had without money. Do you think Pepe Díaz is marrying you for your pretty face?'

Pilár's hand flew instinctively to her breast; Doña Mercedes thrust her elbows on the table and her chin between her hands.

'Listen, little fool, little innocent with blue wings; and I'll tell you why you have got to marry Pepe Díaz.'

## Seven

**B**AILARINITO was annoyed when, on entering the third-rate hotel in Sevilla where he was staying, the first person he walked into was Herrera, a bull-fighter with whom, at the moment, he was on awkward terms. It was doubly annoying that Herrera, who was a fourth- or fifth-rank man himself, should come upon Bailarinito staying in a hotel of this class, little better than a matadors' boarding-house.

'Good day, Bailarinito,' remarked Herrera. 'I'm glad to see you.'

'Are you in the ring on Sunday?' enquired Bailarinito, with no answering warmth, but a perfunctory and self-protective exhibition of good-fellowship.

'No, I've got two cocks fighting,' replied Herrera. 'And that reminds me, can you find it convenient to repay me the fifty pesetas you owe me?'

'Not at the moment,' said Bailarinito. 'I'm pretty well cleaned out.'

'All right. I'll see you later then,' said Herrera significantly. Bailarinito looked aside and spat into a cuspidor. 'You'd better take a look in at the Kursaal to-night, if you've nothing better to do; they've got some new ones—there's a Madrileña. . . .'

'I'll see,' snapped Bailarinito, and slouched up to the reception desk to ask after letters. There was nothing; he bit his lip in anger, hanging his head down, moving it slightly from side to side, and rolling his eyes about him in a way that drew friendly shouts of *toro* upon him in genial company. Not that Bailarinito



in any other way resembled a bull; he was tall and whip-like, with lax movements, save in the ring. His main preoccupation—women—was written all over him.

No word from Granada; that was awkward. He did not know for certain whether Don José was coming over for the fight to-morrow. He rarely missed a corrida at Sevilla, although, as we have seen, he never went into the Plaza de Toros when Bailarinito was fighting. He liked to be in the town, to sit in the club and renew old acquaintanceships: most of all, he liked to be with Pepe, to estimate with a keen eye the exact degree of esteem in which his son was held among the *afición* of bull-fighting; perhaps to put in a tactful word in quarters from which advantage was likely to accrue, and mainly to spend money freely in the wine-shops. He had become a more genial character than he had been during the latter part of his own career in the ring; much more genial than he was in Granada, where his conduct was regulated by so strict a perception of what was owing to himself and his dignity that most people were a little in awe of him. But in Sevilla he was different; whether it was the quivering and delicate gaiety of the town itself, its irresistible feminine allure, or whether it was that El Bailarín was satisfied to take a secondary place to Bailarinito, and therefore became simpler, more comradely, and less arrogant, it would be difficult to say. In walking down the Sierpes with his son—the pair of them with fine Andalucian hats on their heads, the cynosure of all eyes, conscious of themselves as a pair of blood horses—he touched the pinnacle of a bliss that not even his maddest moments of personal acclaim had brought him.

Bailarinito had a very particular reason, on this occasion, for wishing his father to come to Sevilla. He was up to the ears in debt, which is no rare state for a matador, and had intended to make an appeal to Don José to help him out of his difficulties. It would not be a pleasant matter; Don José's passion for his son was only equalled by his objection to parting with money. He had already given Bailarinito to understand that any excessive ostentation must be postponed, as it was in his own case, until

after his marriage. But things had come to a pretty pass with Bailarinito, and, much as he disliked the prospect, he was determined to get his father to advance him a loan of six or seven thousand pesetas, which could be repaid out of Pilár's money.

Side by side with this cause for eagerness to see his father ran, however, a less agreeable emotion.

Bailarinito was aware that, at the moment, his professional stock was in a rocky condition: that, unless he was careful, Don José would get wind of it, and the results would not be pleasant for Bailarinito. Don José would, as he knew, forgive everything save an affront to his pride; and if Bailarinito failed to support the name to which, so far, he had managed, by valour, to contribute a reasonable quota, there would be the devil to pay.

A cluster of men raised their heads as he went into the café, and nodded laconic greetings without interrupting the game they were playing. Bailarinito scowled. They might at least have put off their game long enough to shake hands with him. Ignoring the friendly glances that one or two shot at him, he ordered beer, and snapped his fingers for the bootblack to go out and buy him a copy of *La Libertad*. The beer was brought, and the usual little cold anchovies, with toothpicks thrust through them. He spun a duro on the table, and rejected the change; he might as well buy a little enthusiasm over his arrival in Sevilla! In his black mood he exaggerated the attitude of the other occupants of the café; none of them knew him very well, and deference held them back from greeting with greater warmth a matador whom they all knew to be difficult, moody, and touchy of his dignity. Bailarinito had entered like a thunderclap, so they had taken what they considered the wisest way of acknowledging his presence. But as he sat there, his fingers drumming an iron tattoo on the table, his shoulders hunching restlessly from side to side, there were plenty of eyes to appraise his condition; eyebrows were raised, shoulders executed expressive shrugs. Bailarinito was as jumpy as a cat; one of his women had been messing him about. He'd have his work cut out to get clear of his hang-over by Sunday afternoon.

This damned question of money! he was thinking, as he speared anchovies. He wanted at least five hundred pesetas immediately, to bribe the Press with: they would be on to him like wolves unless he did something about it. That meant a hundred apiece before he went into the ring. What chance had a man, after all, who could not afford to maintain a first-class cuadrilla? He was sick of the cheap lot he was employing at the present time; if ever he managed to get a good one, the fellow was certain to be bought away from him by a rival bull-fighter who could pay more.

He rose, flinging back his chair, and crossed the café to have a look at one of Page's posters of the fight, and see what the personnel of the ring amounted to.

The first thing that caught his eye was his own name, in smaller print than that of Armillita. That made him boil. He could endure, for the present, to be billed below Ortega, Villalta, or Lalanda—although, in his own opinion, he was at least equal to the latter—but to be pushed in a corner for Armillita made him see red. There'd be a hell of a row about this! Once before, in Cordoba, a similar thing had happened and the printer had the impudence to excuse himself by saying that the length of Bailarinito's name made it difficult to fit a line of big lettering becomingly. Deliberately he counted the letters in Armillita's name—only two less than in his own. Somebody was going to pay for this—Pagés—or somebody.

A hand fell on his shoulder; he jerked his head round to see a man he knew and did not like—a big, consequential fellow, with crimson face and small bloodshot eyes.

'Domecq's sent a batch of good bulls down this time; I guess he thought he'd better after the *choto* bunch he did on us last Sunday.'

'What's Domecq want with bulls anyhow?' snarled Bailarinito. 'Let him stick to brandy.'

Garcia chuckled easily.

'Where are you staying?'

'That's my business.'

'I only asked. Armillita's at the Inglaterra,' volunteered Garcia, watching Bailarinito out of his small, knowing eyes.

Another prick for Bailarinito; why should he be at a place little better than a fonda, and Armillita at the hotel where all the first-class matadors stayed?

'One of his admirers brought him over from Madrid by airplane,' added Garcia, allowing his eyes to fall to the tip of his cigarette.

Bailarinito made a great effort to control himself; with a forced laugh of geniality he clapped Garcia on the shoulder.

'Good for Armillita. Let's have a drink.'

He would get round his father about this; Don José must be made to see that it was not suitable for Bailarinito to stay in places like Las Ocas. When, he would like to know, had El Bailarín ever occupied low-class lodgings in the towns where he was fighting? Nowadays, when he came, he was the guest of another old-time star of the bull-ring, who had a house in Triana. A convenient arrangement for Bailarinito, who did not wish his father too closely on his heels for every hour in the day. El Bailarín must be made to see that it was impossible to keep up prestige under such conditions.

He flung himself out into Sierpes in a villainous mood of ill temper, that was not cooled by his recognition by various pedestrians. He forgot his *tenue*; with his hands in his pockets Bailarinito looked both cheap and raffish, shouldering his way through the crowd that drifted between the close-set shop windows. Sierpes was boiling, as usual, with its evening population: girls in couples, criticizing the fans, mainly cheap, showy products to catch the eyes of tourists: a group of young blades before a hatter's, which displayed, among its more conventional wear, a priest's biretta and the plum-coloured velvet toque of a matador; men like walking clothes-horses, hung from head to foot with cheap ties; countrymen in corduroys bleached to the colour of the chalky land they worked upon: Andalusian dandies, consciously elegant in the riding-habit of the country; and respectable bourgeois gentlemen in the black they had probably

worn for three years, in mourning for some obscure relation-in-law they had never met. The men with the sweetstuff stalls spun their lottery wheels; the sign, '*Sol y Sombra*,' drew a steady stream of purchasers into the ticket agencies that sold, with a goodly percentage added, the seats for the bull-fights; almond- and shrimp-sellers sat side by side, more interested in the passers-by than in the sale of their goods. Threading the crowds came the tourists with their sun-blistered faces, their enormous flat shoes, and strained expressions of trying to see everything at once. Shops with mantillas; shops with shawls; long *vitrines* displaying enormous imitation tortoise-shell combs and meretricious souvenirs. The ancient dignity of Sierpes, once so fine, so calm, and aristocratic, had given way to the fever of republicanism that reached its ultimate expression in the incredibly ill-behaved little boys who ran shrieking between the legs of passers-by, and were regarded with kindly indulgence by their elders.

A gipsy accosted Bailarinito as he passed; a rose was in her mouth, the confidence of her beauty in her fringed glance of infinite cajolery. But her lovely, heavy face took on a sullen pout as, for once, he disregarded her advances. Bailarinito was in no mood for dalliance. He swore, one of the low, unclean Spanish oaths, as a small stout man in a broad-brimmed Cordoban hat—so pale a silver as almost to be white—button-holed him and drew him into a backwater of the traffic. Bailarinito's mouth set in an ugly line.

'Now then, Bailarinito, what about that account of yours we wrote you about in Madrid? It's time we had a settlement, you know. It's been standing over long enough now.'

'Then it can stand over a bit longer,' snapped Bailarinito. To hell with the little swine! To dun him for money, here in the open street! If he had been Bienvenida or Ortega they would not have dared.

'That won't do,' said the little man, quietly. 'You've got the money somewhere, Bailarinito; what about that case of swords you've just bought in Valencia?'

'What the hell's that got to do with you?'

'It's got this much—you'll find yourself in the ayuntamiento if you don't pay up within the next twenty-four hours.'

Bailarinito bit his lip.

'I've told you you'll get your money. I'm marrying a rich wife,' he mumbled.

'Then you'd better be quick about it,' said the little man shortly. A woman selling lottery tickets poked her head under Bailarinito's elbow and whined her request. Without looking at her Bailarinito put his hand in his pocket, pulled out some pesetas, and took the ticket. As she blessed him and shuffled away, Bailarinito, smiling diabolically into the face of his companion, tore the lottery ticket into small pieces, and scattered them upon the pavement.

'I shouldn't have thought you could have afforded to throw away a chance of luck,' grunted the other.

'Not my numbers,' said Bailarinito lightly, and continued his way along Sierpes.

I'd better walk, he was thinking. I'll have to get some exercise before to-morrow. He was, he knew it, villainously out of condition; the whites of his eyes were almost amber, and every nerve in his body was like a jumping tooth. Although only just over his twenty-first birthday, he looked at least ten years older by reason of the deep lines of dissipation that marked his face.

He was living exactly the sort of life his father had lived twenty years ago. He was going through that same ruinous experience of adulation which finishes so many young bull-fighters, and he had neither Don José's skill nor his stamina to support it. He was pitting his own strength against the forces of dissipation, and, until the last three months, had believed that he was winning. He had not hesitated to make the most of his relationship to El Bailarín, and this had at first procured him favours to which his own position hardly entitled him. He had great daring, some inherited talent, and he had been trained in the school at Malaga; these, and his own good looks—Bailarinito admirably realized the type which English and American women

like to think represents the bull-fighter—gave him a start among his contemporaries that less fortunate boys lacked. In every town he came to, women of all classes had showered their favours upon him; he was insufferably vain, jealous of his popularity; and he had not the sense to make those trivial acts of self-sacrifice which would have afforded him a good cuadrilla. In other words, he was sacrificing his public career to his private one, and the events of the last three months had brought this fact painfully home to him, although he lacked the strength of character to make a change in his habits.

He had been terribly spoilt by Don José, who was more inclined to see Pepe as he wished him to be than as he was. Although as an ardent of the pre-Belmontesque epoch, Don José did not approve of the light, Sevillian style that was Pepe's, paternal pride triumphed over prejudice, and exaggerated Pepe's few lucky shots in the ring, blinding Don José to the trickery by which these were brought about. An icy critic of the work of other matadors, El Bailarín's critical faculty seemed entirely to desert him in connection with his son's work. The fact that he had never seen Pepe in a corrida naturally strengthened this self-delusion.

Lacking in imagination, he had a stone-cold valour that lent a spurious emotionalism to his performances in the ring. He had never received a wound in any particularly dangerous place, and could not imagine himself doing so. But he relied too much upon instinct, and was too conceited to accept well-meant advice. The public, which, to begin with, had received him kindly on his father's account, was easily conquered by the gay swagger, the merry nonchalance with which Bailarinito brought off his monstrous suertes; for he was too wise to take his moods into the ring. He had not yet that lofty certainty of his own magnificence which, in the later days of El Bailarín, had allowed the latter to do as he pleased in the bull-ring.

Thanks to influence, he had escaped the destructive experience of the novillados, and had been launched as a banderillero in the caudrilla of one of his father's friends; and, after a very creditable year, during which he handled the darts with so much

conviction that he attracted favourable attention, made his *début* in the provinces, and soon fought his way to Madrid. Vanity, to begin with, made him do his best; but, when the first thrills wore off, he grew careless, and often only saved himself from obloquy by some difficult and desperate trick that happened to come off. But the true aficionado is not impressed by a matador who takes foolish risks, and Bailarinito's reputation was not as steady as it had been twelve months ago.

Conversation went on in the café which he had just left behind.

'Bailarinito here again. I suppose he'll make a fool of himself as he did in Barcelona.'

'He'd have got the cushions in another five minutes.'

'Bailarinito can fight when he likes.'

'Yeah? Show us when he likes.'

'He's got nerves.'

'Sure he's got nerves.'

'The Press has got him taped.'

'They're laying off to give him a chance, but, if the gold-mine at Granada dries up, what they'll have to say about Bailarinito will set *El Clarín* on fire.'

'It was a pretty nasty one they gave him in *Banderillas de Fuego* last week.'

'Bailarinito's about the luckiest fighter that ever was.'

'That doesn't say he hasn't got guts.'

'Sure he's got guts; it's brain he's weak in.'

'Bailarinito can give a good show if the bulls are *claros*, but he knows no more of bull-fighting than my foot.'

'He's an imitator; can't do anything for himself.'

'His *cambio de rodillas* isn't so bad.'

'When it comes off.'

'He's going to marry a rich girl in Granada.'

'Then he'd better hurry up about it, and he'll have enough to pay his fare home at the end of the season.'

Bailarinito had reached the end of the Gran Capitán, and stood facing the Toro del Oro, with the river ahead of him. He would take a turn along the front, and then cut back, by way of the



Reyes Católicos, to his hotel; that would be enough for the present. He felt abominably slack—which he attributed to the climate of Sevilla. He was as ignorant about his body as he was about other things.

Sunset had hung the horizon with a cloth of bright gold; the Guadalquivir churned between its banks, catching the yellow of the sky, and diluting it to milky ochre with its own deposits. An American gunboat lay close in; Bailarinito marked it with a lightening eye. One had fun with Americans. Across the bridge, Triana lay low, sunning itself, a cluster of small white houses, with here and there a façade of delicate turquoise blue. The bull-ring lay on the right of the wide avenue; as he passed the gates he cast a look of apprehension at the huge, blank circular wall. For the first time in his life he definitely disliked the prospect of appearing there on the morrow. He lengthened his long loping stride and sunk his head between his shoulders. God, but he did feel rotten. Gomez was a rotten lawyer; those loans which had been confidently anticipated when his betrothal to Pilar was announced had not yet gone through, and what would happen if Don José did not turn up on the evening train he could not imagine. It struck him that if Don José were coming he should be here by now; he knew the café at which to find him—a beer-shop kept by two Germans, where they served good shrimps, round the corner of Sierpes.

Three priests came walking slowly towards him. In spite of his modern scepticism, Bailarinito's heart gave an uncomfortable tick in his bosom. A sight like that would have been enough to send Gallo flying out of Sevilla! *Mala suerte*. He swerved into a side street to avoid meeting them directly, and his foot clanged against a discarded tin lying in the gutter. Holy Virgin, was he becoming as superstitious as a gipsy? The two prime symbols of bad luck, coming together, had shaken every nerve in his body.

When he reached the beer-shop, Don José was not there. There were, however, plenty of friends, who welcomed Bailarinito with back-slappings, who shouted their pleasure at the advent of a comrade whose vanity would not allow them to pay for their

own drinks. Bailarinito had very little change in his pocket, but he knew the German brothers, and nodded an agreement over the heads of his companions. The tankards of beer circulated, the piles of shells accumulated on the plates and under the counter. The beer mounted to his brain, he became the gayest of the company. He bought more lottery tickets, glanced at them, and, since they never showed his lucky numbers, presented them to anyone who came into the shop: to the beggars; the men selling ties; the boys with their baskets of the twisted Sevillian bread. They all blessed him, called down good fortune upon him. He began, after awhile, to feel that the sinister effects of the three priests and the empty tin were cancelled by the amount of goodwill in which he was now encircled.

When he came out, Bailarinito had not a penny in his pocket, and the soft Spanish dusk had laid its violet bloom on the lamp-lit streets. There is no town in Spain so light-hearted, so free from responsibility, as Sevilla.

He grimaced over the fact that he would have to dine in his hotel. Possibly Herrera would be there to annoy him with his unwelcome presence. A taxi-cab passed very slowly; in it, Bailarinito recognized the pale, serious face of Armillita. The two bull-fighters recognized each other; bowed ceremoniously. Hell to Armillita, with his Hotel Inglaterra, and his rich admirer and his airplane! To-morrow he, Bailarinito, would fight superbly, put Armillita's nose out of joint, and collect the pesetas afterwards; meanwhile he must find someone from whom he could borrow money for the necessary propinas of the ring.

When he reached Las Ocas, which stands in a narrow thoroughfare just off Mendez Nuñez, a letter was handed to him, in his father's writing. Don José wrote in a stiff, jerky script, as though the act of holding a pen was distasteful to him, which, no doubt, it was. Bailarinito tore open the envelope, and slowly mastered the contents.

He would not be coming to Sevilla, wrote Don José. Juan had had an accident. It had happened on the previous Sunday morning (the day when Bailarinito was fighting in Barcelona).

Don José did not specify the accident, but went on to say that the boy was not in good health; that it seemed as though he could no stand the heat of the Granada summer. He had decided, when Juan was about again, to send him to Sanpedro, to see whether country life would put a little strength into him.

He ended his letter with a significant sentence:

‘Doña Mercedes is ill; Pilár is nursing her.’

The last sentence was the one ray of brightness, from Bailarinito’s point of view, upon the letter. He had, in spite of his selfishness, a genuine affection for his little brother, and wondered what Juan had been doing with himself. It was very inconvenient that his father should be prevented from coming to Sevilla, but some way must turn up out of the difficulty. The thought had hardly entered his mind when, as though an angel had prompted his entrance, there came into the tiled hall of Las Ocas the figure of a middle-aged aficionado of the bull-fight who had always been extremely kind to Bailarinito.

Las Ocas was not a hotel at which one would expect to meet wealthy people; but Don Luis Cimiez, although he had plenty of money, earned in the fisheries, had never lost the inferiority of his humble beginnings. He could neither read nor write, but under his air of sleepy stupidity there lurked one of the most astute business brains in Sevilla, balanced by a soft and foolish liking for anyone, met outside business, who would tolerate his society. He was a stupendous bore, having no conversation, and varying his silences only by an extraordinary high-pitched girlish giggle. He giggled now, when he met Bailarinito; for it flattered him inordinately to be seen in the company of a matador, and Bailarinito at once prepared to make the most of his advantage.

He found himself sitting down with Don Luis to one of the interminable, badly cooked meals of many courses which Las Ocas served to its guests. It was of no use suggesting to Don Luis that they should dine elsewhere, for the latter had never accustomed himself to polite table manners, and preferred to eat among society that paid no attention when he took his fish and meat in his fingers. Don Luis ordered instantly a bottle of wine

that had to be procured from another establishment; its bouquet wreathed the squalid table, and put heart into Balarinito.

He worked, during that dinner, harder than he ever worked in the bull-ring; for he had to be so gay, so sprightly and entertaining—with no encouragement other than Don Luis's giggle—that his companion was reduced to a state of drivelling ecstasy. When he arose he had reaped his reward; he had a thousand pesetas in his pocket, and Don Luis, seduced and dazzled, was hardly aware he had opened his pocket-book.

The Kursaal was crowded when Balarinito arrived there, with a couple of friends, both matadors, whom he had picked up in the town. The air was blue with smoke, the racket deafening, the floor crowded with men; upstairs, among the boxes, moved the sweating waiters, selling coffee at three pesetas fifty to the more sedate portion of the audience that numbered nearly as many women as men. A hot, sweaty, lascivious atmosphere: contributed to by the performers themselves, the girls who came naked on the stage to sing songs whose obscenity was lost in the uproar of the audience. This latter, however, knew the words of the songs, for at certain intervals, during which the girls opened their rouged, smiling mouths soundlessly, and stretched out their bare arms to the audience, a roar of laughter broke into the endless babel, and lumps of sugar were showered upon the stage.

Balarinito found himself wedged against Herrera.

'Ola, have you come to see the Madrileña?' said Herrera.

Balarinito did not reply, his attention being given to a girl in a brown *cache-sexe* and a comb, whose smile of professional invitation was directed upon him. Most of the Kursaal girls knew him; he was friendly with one who was not here to-night—for a good reason; she was having a baby. Balarinito hoped it was not his.

The three matadors found their way to a table. The other two had drunk more cautiously than Balarinito, who was afire with the wine he had consumed, during dinner and since, without being in the least fuddled. An enormously stout woman came on the stage in three flounces of turquoise blue, which left exposed

her pale brown stomach; her quite inaudible song, which she whispered in the decision not to waste vocal effort upon an audience indifferent to it, was punctuated at intervals with shouts of applause. A comedian, made up to look like Grock, made bad jokes. A degraded parody of Spanish dancing followed the comedian. One of his companions nudged Bailarinito.

There was no need to do so. The girl who came on the stage had every eye in the house; she had a thread of green chiffon across her breasts, and her kohl-lidded eyes picked up the colour. The old flamenco dancer who moved from box to box in the upper circle, with a spray of syringa in her hair, cadging cigarettes from tourists, fixed her glittering eyes upon the figure below. '*C'est comme ça que j'étais moi-même,*' she asserted in her rasping Spanish-French to the young man from whom she had just secured '*un cigarillo ingles.*' Jealousy stiffened her heavy, middle-aged frame; she reared her hawk-like profile, and departed to sit among her friends the prostitutes at the back of the boxes: looking, in her black satin coat, for all the world like the most respectable of Spanish matrons, save for the spray of syringa in her hair.

Bailarinito in every particle was conscious of the warm flesh that curved and swayed like an amber rose in the spot-light. He pictured how such a girl would respond to his caresses—how differently from Pilár's chaste submission! He had definitely made up his mind to possess her, when he became conscious of observation from the right. He twisted his head sharply.

At an approximate table sat a fellow bearing the marks of a gipsy: the flattened, Moorish nose, high cheek-bones, well-masked in thick white flesh; the burning eyes set in aslant, and faintly crisped hair brushed straight back from the brow; a blue line of the same hair crawled down the cheek-bone. This personage was looking at himself with a concentrated malice that roused a prickle in the spine of Bailarinito. He understood instantly that this was the girl's lover, and that he was being warned off. Bailarinito shrugged faintly, allowed his eyes to drop to the beer in front of him. One does not risk an open challenge

about a woman in the Kursaal; but Bailarinito's mind was made up, and to-night he was completely reckless.

'Who's the girl?'

'They call her La Gaviota.' The speaker gave him a meaning look. 'I'd lay off that if I were you. She's Mattos's girl.'

'That Mattos?' enquired Bailarinito, with a barely perceptible movement of the head backward.

The bull-fighter nodded, careful to avert his eyes from the quarter of the room in which Mattos was sitting.

'He's *gitano*,' he added, out of the corner of his lips. 'No good. Keep out.'

Bailarinito set his jaw; he was not accustomed to being told that anything he planned to do was no good. Presently he asked, in a voice he made deliberately casual, where the girl lived. One of his companions did not know; the other vaguely believed it was in Abades—one of the ancient narrow alleys behind the Giralda.

'I know Abades,' said Bailarinito. 'There used to be a five-peseta house there.'

'Kept by her father's sister; that's the place,' nodded the other.

Bailarinito knew the house; it was up near the boot-mender's—the bit that jutted out just past the old palace of the Abades that was now the Pension Don Marcos. The five-peseta house was on the opposite side—he was not sure which.

'*Bue* no,' said Bailarinito, getting up. He was careful, in passing out, not to look at the gipsy's table, nor at the stage, upon which the girl still displayed her loveliness.

The sky was powdered with large, glittering stars; the tower of the Giralda raised its exquisite campanile into an archway of pure midnight blue; the streets of Sevilla were quiet and deserted, save for the trams that screamed their way along the Gran Capitán. Bailarinito found the entrance to Abades in a broken space that reminded him of his own Granada; passed beneath a wooden buttressing into one of the narrow cobbled alleys that form a network behind the main streets. He went swiftly, silently, glad of the shadows, avoiding the light of the ancient iron lamps

clamped to the walls at long intervals. No living creature seemed to be abroad; a bat, swooping, struck him in the face, and Balarinito yelped and crossed himself. It was a place of ghosts; a strange habitation for so lovely and living a thing as La Gaviota.

He went swiftly along, keeping close to the walls under the rejas; now a rose or orange light showed in an upper window, now the bright spaces of a patio revealed themselves behind an exquisite iron grille. Once, in the darkness of a vestibulo, two silent and motionless figures pressed against the forbidding iron-work, one on either side, silhouetted against the inner light. Balarinito made no particular haste there; lost in the trance of courtship, no lovers would observe him.

There was the jutting-out piece he remembered; the gully narrowed there to half its width. That side of the street was fortunately plunged in darkness; the moonlight drenched the opposite façades to about a third of their depth; a palm, looped in a balcony, caught the light on its desiccated leaves, and shone like silver. He looked about him for some special coign of vantage, and found it in the depth of a doorway. With the collar of his coat turned up, to conceal his white shirt and the lower part of his face, he would be invisible. He settled down, with folded arms, to wait, his eyes fixed upon the opposite houses. It was some time since he had visited the five-peseta house; he was not certain which of them it was. These opposite houses were of less noble aspect than those facing them; they had low, square doorways, filled to the brim with darkness. The rejas showed no light—save one, where a candle served to reveal a thin tattered curtain of yellow. Somehow he felt persuaded that this was the house of La Gaviota.

The tower of the Giralda shook out its quivering annunciation of the hour. At two, someone entered the house next to him; a little later a taxi lurched to a standstill from a side street. He dared not lean out to see who it contained; but presently the unequal footsteps of a man and a woman announced the arrival of those for whom he waited. He shrank more deeply into his corner.

She was tiny, entirely shadowed by the mantilla which she held closely across her face; her small feet, in high-heeled shoes and pale stockings, flickered in and out beneath the hem of her discreet black dress. Such discretion, after so complete an abandonment. It whetted the edge of Bailarinito's desire. Almost he could have flung himself out of his shelter upon the gipsy, whose broad pale face showed as flat as a coin beneath the shadow of his broad hat-brim. Neither spoke. Both, in silence, descended into the darkness of the doorway, as into a well—the gipsy had to stoop to do so—and vanished. Bailarinito remained, gnawing his lips and fingers.

The taxi extricated itself from the jam of walls and turnings with a great commotion of gear-changing and brakes; he heard it jolting away, and silence like a blanket again settled upon Abades.

Fortune indeed favoured him: less than an hour later, when his body was in a flame, a figure emerged, alone, from the doorway. He held his breath, recognising the gipsy, who stood quite still, looking up and down the alley as though he suspected a hidden watcher. Then he turned, crossed, and vanished into a side street.

Bailarinito knew he must be quick, but not too quick: he must not risk the return of Mattos, who, as his movements showed, was suspicious enough, and who would be on the alert for anyone taking advantage of his ostensible departure. At last Bailarinito judged it was safe, and, swift as a swallow, flitted across the passage, and dipped under the doorway.

He found himself in a little dark patio, filled with the sound of running water. There was a lighted window, with pots of flowers. The window was opened. Bailarinito crept across the patio until he stood immediately beneath it; keeping in the shadow, he cautiously scraped his foot on the ground. Above him the light went out.

For a moment the horrid thought that she was either faithful to her lover, or too afraid of him to risk a betrayal, burned Bailarinito up. He felt crazy with his desire for the girl: mad



enough to break his way into the house, to raise a commotion which could have but one ending for himself. But as he waited, holding his breath, the tiny click of a door opening in the dark reassured him. . . .

An hour later he was in the patio again; he dared not risk staying longer. He must not chance, with the coming of the dawn, his departure being observed and betrayed to Mattos. He felt joyful, gay, recreated. He paused for a minute under the doorway to consider what would be his best way back to the hotel, and decided that, as he did not know the region, his best plan was to go as he had come, although his sense of direction told him that this led him away from the Plaza San Fernandez, which was his landmark for Las Ocas. Once more pulling up his coat-collar, he stepped into the alley. At the same moment something struck him heavily between the shoulders; he gave a sigh, and dropped on the cobbles.

'Bailarinito's got himself knifed in Abades.'

'Huh. *Finito*?'

'No. They've got him in hospital.'

'Who's fighting in his place?'

'Herrera. It's the first big fight he's had this season.'

'He's a good boy. . . . Let's find out if there's anything left in the barrera.'

The two speakers turned and walked solemnly towards the abono. At the door, the first paused to remark seriously:

'I always said something would happen to Bailarinito if he couldn't keep his feet together.'

The other bent his head sideways, and stuck his tongue in his cheek to mark his appreciation of this not very subtle jest.

## Eight

**P**ILÁR might never have known the truth about Balarinito's accident had it not been for an incident for which the illness of Doña Mercedes was responsible. She read no newspapers and had no communication with the outside world, save through the old women whose interests did not run to the mishaps of matadors. Granada, naturally, rang with the tale. It was related, with variations, in the Café Alameda, in Escribania, in every wine-shop, and in the solitary cabaret the town possessed. Don José shrugged his shoulders upon the matter; it was just such an incident as might have happened to himself had he not been luckier than Pepe. It was annoying, because it had lost the boy a good engagement; but the wound was a slight one, and in a month at least Pepe would be fit to return to the bull-ring. He wrote—reluctantly, but with a sense of inevitability—a cheque for Pepe's attendance in the hospital, and devoted his thoughts to Juan, and to the tale which must be told up at the Carmen de los Arrayanes.

Doña Mercedes had been taken ill a few days before this misfortune. Like those of the majority of old ladies, her complaint was difficult to define, but it was unpleasant and severe enough in its manifestations to absorb the greater part of Pilár's time in nursing her.

Doña Mercedes had flatly refused to have a professional nurse in the house; there would be quite enough to pay for, with the doctor coming up the hill twice a day. What he wanted to do

that for she could not imagine, for his visits did her no good. It was just one of the unprincipled tricks of medicos for running up big accounts. Pilár, who had nothing to do with her days save go to the cathedral and make garments for her bridal, could put these things aside for the present and attend to her.

Pilár submitted—she was always submitting, it seemed to her, but, as this was one of the saintly duties imposed upon her by her religion, she accepted her submissions meekly.

She had horrible things to do in that bedroom of her grandmother's, which was part bedroom, part pantry, and part coal-cellar, and of which the window was never opened from year end to year end. Doña Mercédes, who believed that every servant she ever had robbed her, carried into her bedroom, which she kept under lock and key, strange little packets of sugar, bags of flour, vegetables, and even carbon, which remained there until the perishable goods got furred with green mould, or rotted, or were eaten by mice; enormous cockroaches gambolled about the floor at night, and were talked to as though they were pets by Doña Mercédes, while Pilár, crouching upon a chair with her feet held up off the floor, closed her eyes, dug her nails into the palms of her hands, and prayed, 'Oh, Blessed Virgin, don't let them crawl on me!'

Chita, Maria's ancient successor, was supposed to help her in her ministrations; but Isabella, the little girl who helped Chita in the kitchen when she was not up in the mirador, listening to the protestations of her lover across the wall, Doña Mercédes would not have across the threshold. As Chita had her housework to do, this bound Pilár for almost every hour of the day.

Doña Mercédes was sleeping at the hour when Don José appeared, for the second time, at the Carmen de los Arrayanes.

Bound beneath the weight of her grandmother's confidence, the girl went to receive him in the upper hall, her limbs trembling with her innocent guilt. She had not met Don José since the day of their first encounter.

In the broad, stone-flagged hall, on which the sunlight lay in shifting patches, they faced each other, the young, inexperienced

girl and the middle-aged, experienced man, her father-in-law to be. She had bidden Isabella fetch chairs, and they sat opposite each other, she still as an image, with hands folded on her lap. Her down-drooped eyes lent an expression of almost unearthly purity to her small face.

For the second time Don José felt those intimations of a world of which he had no knowledge or understanding which seemed to emanate from her silence. The sensation was not altogether an agreeable one; like many valorous men, Don José feared what he did not understand, and suspected it of power to harm him. Yet there was something that drew him to the girl—possibly some quite superficial appeal, based upon her youth and beauty, that stirred in him a tenderness he had never felt save for his own children. A formless uneasiness stirred in him as he imagined, for a second, Pepe and Pilár. . . . But the thought was too evasive, too remote from his usual way of thinking, for him to seize upon it. His gaze lingered with an emotion that was half erotic half reverential, upon the crown of her drooped head. She had, he felt, almost the innocence of infancy. The same tenderness prompted him to lean across and lay a hand on her knee. It trembled beneath his pressure, and her face went a grey white.

‘You must not upset yourself. I have brought you some news of Pepe.’

Her eyelids trembled, but she did not raise her eyes.

‘Has he been killed by a bull?’ Her voice was destitute of expression.

‘*Madre de Dios*, no!’ Don José snatched his hand from Pilár’s knee and hastily crossed himself. ‘He has had an accident in Sevilla, that is all. You need not make a great deal of it. Boys, when they are young, get themselves into trouble very often. There are quarrels, and sometimes a serious thing happens.’

‘Pepe has been fighting,’ she said slowly. She knew now that for an instant she had indulged a thought of frightful sincerity—the blind hope that Pepe was dead. She closed her eyes completely. ‘Holy Mother of Jesus, forgive me.’ She would have to

put that in her next confession; she would be given a special penance. . . . An almost ecstatic expression spread itself over her closed, still face; the prospect of penance filled her with almost voluptuous satisfaction. The way to holiness through penance; it was a path her feet trod trancedly, feeling at every step they drew nearer to the Cross.

Don José's hand again pressed her knee. She opened her eyes and looked into his for the first time. They told her nothing, those dark eyes—Pepe's colour, of a date-brown. She knew nothing of the language of men's eyes. But he looked kind. His dark eyes seemed to penetrate hers with their kindness; and in that moment of apprehension it seemed to Pilár that the love of God was not enough; that one needed something more immediate, something that one could see and feel, that did not hang altogether on faith. . . . She gave a sigh.

'Yes, he has been fighting,' said Don José, in a tone of relief. Pilár herself had provided the solution of his problem. 'He got hurt and is in hospital. If we were nearer to Sevilla you could go and see him. It would be a great comfort to Pepe to see you beside his bed. As though his patron saint were there to look after him! You are everything in the world to him.' He emphasized this point because he knew it to be untrue. Pepe had not reached the age when any woman could be everything in the world to him. He could never reach it while he continued to follow his profession. But Don José told this lie to Pilár exactly as he would have lied to Juan, if it had been necessary to comfort the boy. If she believed and remembered it, it might comfort her. His heart, so sluggish in its reactions to ordinary emotion, so easily stirred by the spectacular, drew attention to itself by increasing the force of its beat; his tenderness again had access to him. He found himself wishing to stroke the silken bands of her hair. He got up and stood beside her chair, and did so.

Pilár closed her eyes, and felt Don José's hand passing across the crown of her head. It was a strange sensation, thus to be stroked by a man. For a few moments she surrendered to it completely; it was the nearest approach to sensuality she had

ever known, and she was far from recognizing it. It gave her pleasure, and it relieved the pain which she had had in her head ever since her close attendance on Doña Mercedes began.

'He kisses your hands and your feet,' went on Don José, 'and implores you to forgive him for this trouble he is causing us all. When he has your forgiveness he says he will get well quickly——'

'I forgive him; can sinners withhold forgiveness from each other——?' She broke off suddenly.

'*Madre de Dios*, you will make an angel of Pepe before you have done with him!' said Don José, with conviction. 'It will be like an angel coming into our house, and we shall all become as good as bread, and Don Antonio will have nothing to absolve us of after we have been to confession! In a little while—perhaps only a month—Pepe will be out of the hospital. He will come home for a few days, and then he has to go to the feria at Badajos. Perhaps he will be here for our own feria, and then we can go about together and you can enjoy all the fun.' His hand ceased its movement; he had remembered, and was annoyed with himself for forgetting, to enquire after Doña Mercedes. As always, the affairs of Pepe had banished everything else from his mind.

'The doctor comes every day, but he does not say much,' she answered his question: she had also stiffened herself, and seemed suddenly to have grown older; no longer a child to have its head stroked. But in every fibre of her body she was still conscious of the hand that had followed its rhythmical course across her head—not gently, as a woman strokes, but with a strong pressure, that seemed to take possession of her head. She realized that in thus permitting him to caress her she had been deceiving him, and her eyes suddenly filled with tears, and, bending her head, she pressed her lips closely against his hand. 'Forgive me,' she whispered.

Don José was astounded; it was a tribute he had been accustomed to receiving from women, but this kiss from Pilár penetrated the hard crust of his vanity and called up a chivalry he had hardly known he possessed. He laid both his hands on her

shoulders, raising her, so that he saw her quivering mouth, and her closed eyelids from which the tears were streaming. All her mysterious power, which had made him uneasy with her, seemed to be dissolved in her tears, which he could not understand but attributed to some inexplicable feminine caprice, into whose cause it was never profitable to enquire. He thought she was asking him to forgive her for kissing his hand, and congratulated himself that he was to have so meek and humble a daughter-in-law.

'There is nothing to forgive; but, if there were, I would forgive you everything,' he said magnificently. 'You are already my daughter, as Pepe is my son.' Stooping a little forward, he laid his lips to Pilár's brow. She had a slight sensation of dizziness, which passed as she opened her eyes. He forbore to look at her eyes, fearing to see there that strange look that would recall his uneasiness. For the first time their relationship seemed, to Don José, to be satisfactorily established. She began, with outward calmness, to dry her eyes.

'When you are married to Pepe,' said Don José heavily, 'you shall be very happy. Life is short, and it behoves us to make the best of it. We shall all live together in great happiness. I shall be glad of a daughter, and Juan of a sister——' Whatever he had been going to add, he broke it off, picked up his hat from the chest, and stepped through the door which Pilár held open into the sunlight. The cactus-bushes outside the door were coated with white dust.

'Señor Don José,' said Pilár hesitatingly, 'you speak of happiness as though you were not sure what it means to be happy.'

For the second time he stood astounded. Lacking introspection, he had never associated the restlessness, the lack of savour of his days, with unhappiness. What, after all, had he to be unhappy about? He had a son who was a matador, another who was going to be a priest, and a third who, according to his tutor, showed signs of becoming a poet. What more could a man desire? He had a comfortable and dignified home, a good servant. Yet

he found himself, to his astonishment, speaking to Pilár of things he had never confessed to a living soul: of mornings when the dawn of consciousness brought him a nameless heaviness, when he seemed to have no resilience of spirit, when a morose sense of destiny oppressed him. He spoke of these things in a matter-of-fact voice, in which he would have spoken of business or politics, with the ferrule of his stick stabbing a little honey-comb of holes in the dust at his feet. As he talked, he noticed that his shoes needed polishing.

'Happiness is a thing that belongs to childhood. Later on,' said Don José, speaking to himself, 'it becomes a luxury. It costs too much for ordinary people. I have many troubles. A big barn is not always full of wheat.'

'You and I must search for happiness together, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,' said Pilár, taking his hand. The childish simplicity of the words recalled Don José to himself; he stood for a moment, amazed at himself that he should have thus been betrayed into speaking his most secret thoughts to a mere girl, the betrothed wife of his son Pepe. He laughed, the slightly self-conscious laugh of one who is not in the habit of talking seriously to women. 'That your grandmother may soon be better; I will send you news of Pepe when it comes.'

'Go with God,' sighed Pilár. She stood watching his short, stiff figure stepping upward to the door in the outer wall. He turned and waved his hand to her as to a child; yet, in the act, he was conscious of some maladjustment, of a thing that did not fit the occasion or the girl who stood framed in her doorway watching him gravely.

She was in the chemist's, half-way down the Reyes Católicos, a day or two later. The shop was not empty; two men stood behind the counter, talking to a group in front. She gave her order in a low voice, for she was still nervous and self-conscious of the solitary expeditions to which the sickness of her grandmother condemned her. Doña Mercédes had dismissed the dueña when Pilár's betrothal was settled; it was a needless expense, of which the old woman was glad to be relieved.



Unfortunately, it was necessary for the chemist to consult his books in regard to one of the drugs which the doctor had ordered. Pilár waited, in a panic, afraid of losing the returning tram, which would mean that she would have to hang about the streets for the better part of an hour, or, alternatively, to walk up the hill alone, running the barricade of the idle young men who called themselves students, and never failed to hail any promising maiden with the '*Guapa guapisima!*' that brought the blood to Pilár's unaccustomed cheeks.

It was hardly better in the chemist's shop, where the customers—all men—were eyeing her sidelong.

Their conversation was of bull-fighting; they did not interrupt it at her entrance. Two of the men had evidently just got back from the Argentine; they were asking after this and the other bull-fighter. 'What's happened to Bailarinito?' said one suddenly. Pilár held her breath.

'Oh, he got knifed in Sevilla for messing about with a gipsy's girl,' answered the third carelessly, before the assistant, who had recognized Pilár, had time to create a diversion by flinging down a tray of toothbrushes.

*He got knifed for messing about with a gipsy's girl.*

So that was the truth of it. Don José had lied to her. Her head spun, and she put her hands to it. She seemed to be involved in a net of deception. She did not blame Don José; loyalty to her grandmother bound her to a monstrous silence, which was in itself a lie, as Don José's loyalty to Pepe forced him to lie in defence of him. How black the world—how dark!—that had seemed but a few short weeks ago a shining meadow, a place of innocence. She had suffered herself to be made a party to her grandmother's plan to marry her to Pepe Díaz, had actually pledged her word not to reveal her grandmother's duplicity. Her confessions to Don Felipe were a mockery, and each time he granted her absolution she shivered from head to foot. Day after day, hour after hour, she had laid penance upon herself for that abominable deception that brought upon her the anger of God, forcing herself to remember it—for time and again it would slip

into the background of her memory: so strange, so impossible it seemed, altering completely the complexion of her life: yet imperceptible to all save the two—herself and Doña Mercédes—who knew of it.

What, indeed, was Pepe's sin beside hers? How presumptuous had been her resolution that Pepe should reach a state of redemption through his union with her. How could her body, itself the tabernacle of a sin, act as a channel for the divine? Oh, if he were older, or wiser—say, like his father—so that she might convey to him by some hint, that would not be positively breaking the vow that Doña Mercédes had actually required her to take upon the crucifix, the trick that was being played upon him. Yet, if it had been possible to do this thing, would she have had the courage to face the uncharted future, which was her only alternative?—she, who had never made a plan for herself, whose life had been as restricted as that of a girl in a zenana, so that she had not an idea how to put into practice the simplest means of obtaining a living?

If she could have persuaded herself that she was prepared to face these consequences, the girl would have been, not happier, but less actively wretched. She would not have had the burden of the knowledge that she was actually conniving at a trick that was being played upon Pepe Díaz and his father. All that she could do was to pray and to punish herself without ceasing, and wait for the hour when she could complete her self-purification by confession. She could not even pray for that hour to arrive, since it involved the death of her grandmother.

Her attendance upon Doña Mercédes now appeared to her a means deliberately provided whereby she might accomplish a part of this self-purification. She embraced every opportunity of performing the most revolting duties; she denied herself sleep, exercise, and air for the sake of her self-imposed penance. The hours she gave to meditation were chosen at times which did not interfere with her service. And gradually it seemed to her that during those hours a flower was blooming in her soul: the flower of Divine forgiveness for a sin of which she was not guilty.

She lost the sense of having betrayed God in being loyal to her grandmother. Something within herself became strong as her body weakened. Still bearing the burden of her sin, it was as though she had been shown how to carry this burden, so that its weight no longer crushed her to the earth.

She was no longer revolted by the things she had to do for Doña Mercedes, no longer shuddered at the sight of the obscene bodies of the cockroaches as they trundled themselves across the floor. She was able to despatch her mind—all the conscious part of herself save that which was required by her attendance upon her grandmother—to a distance from which it was no longer conscious of matter. And as her soul thus loosened itself in its fleshy shell, the psychic and spiritual awareness of her girlhood returned with added force. She spent her nights in wakefulness, faint—often with hunger, and always with ecstasy—listening for the footsteps, for the knocks, which might at any moment herald an angelic visitor, come to tell her that her repentance was accepted by God.

Her eye-sockets hollowed, the contours of her face sharpened, her bosom lost what fullness it possessed; she was aware of these things and glad of them, because they marked her progress towards redemption. She had but to wait; and waited, like a dying light which flares up in the socket before its final extinction.

This was the Pilár whom Bailarinito found when he came back to Granada: a bone-white thing, hardly capable of speaking above a whisper, yet infused with a kind of light that he felt without perceiving, which shocked him and took him aback.

She had given orders to Isabella to be about when Bailarinito arrived, since Chita, more reliable, could not be spared from the sick woman's bedside. She knew within ten minutes of his arrival that Isabella, bent on her own affairs, had deserted her; and also that there was no need of such precaution. She had been resolved, if Pepe showed signs of touching her, to drag the crucifix out of her bosom and hold it between them; there must now be nothing carnal between them until after their wedding day. But Pepe sat stiffly on his chair; his arm was still in its sling, his

face burning with a sullen fire, and, after the first glance, he hardly looked at Pilár. Like many men, he was disgusted by sickness in any shape or form, and Pilár looked very sick. The thought of touching her with his body made him shudder.

She questioned him in a whisper about his accident.

'The place is healed up now,' said Pepe shortly. He did not find it necessary to tell her that it had taken longer than it should have done in the healing because of his general condition.

'I am glad the wound in your flesh is healed,' she told him in her hollow voice, that sounded as though it came from some distant convent cell. 'But the wound in your soul only the Blessed Lord Jesus Christ Himself can heal—as He is healing mine. I am praying He will do so; you must do the same.' She had given him, deliberately, a chance to question her; but his egotism was so great he had not even noticed her reference to her own need of healing.

'What do you mean?' said Pepe, aghast. What had she heard? Pilár's eyes were staring through him, as though she saw something behind his back. He jerked round, but there was nothing there. He had thought for a moment that the old woman had risen from her bed and come upon them unawares. 'What are you talking about?' he demanded, with an anger assumed to hide his alarm.

'I know the *truth*,' she whispered.

'I don't know what you mean,' whispered Pepe. 'I had an accident—a fight with a man——'

An expression crossed her face as though he had struck her. For a moment she closed her eyes; it made her look very old, much older than Pepe. He wished she would open them—and, at the next minute, when she had done so, wished she had not. For in her eyes he read that she indeed knew the very truth. But she leaned forward, and with a gesture of humility, laid her hand upon his knee.

'All that we can do is to speak the truth—as nearly as we can.' Her lips were trembling; it made her face look ghastly.

'It's no one's business but my own; we're not married,' he began.

'And God's,' she said simply.

He moistened his lips and forced himself to speak quietly.

'You must be reasonable, Pilár. One has to do these things if one's a man. You don't know. . . . If you'd been there . . . if you'd been kind to me it wouldn't have happened. I only wanted you.' He persuaded himself he was speaking the truth. He felt very ill-used and frightened. Supposing she were to tell him she would not marry him? *De la mano a la boca se pierde la sopa,*' thought Pepe, which is the same as to say, 'Twixt the cup and the lip. . . . In one way it would be a relief; in another it would be catastrophic. He sat looking down at her hand, which remained on his knee. The hand was thin and bloodless; he had a sudden shocked perception of what it might be like to take a nun to bed.

Her next words hardly reassured him.

'We are doing a great wrong to each other in getting married,' she said faintly. 'But the wrong I am doing you is worse than the wrong you are doing me. In the name of God, who knows everything in our hearts, I ask you to forgive me.'

Pepe stared; gave an awkward laugh.

'Of course! I don't see there's much for me to forgive you,' he said; adding more boldly, for apparently she had no intention of breaking off the match. 'But I hope when we are married you will manage to be a little bit more lively—a bit more like other girls, do you see, Pilár? Or I shall feel I have married an angel, and that will be very uncomfortable!' The clumsy joke brought no smile to her lips. He remembered that Doña Mercedes was still by no means out of danger, and put in hastily, 'When your grandmother is better'—or, preferably, dead, he thought—'you will not have anything to worry about.'

'When we are married,' she promised solemnly, 'I will show you the way.' What way? What did she mean? It looked as if during the last few weeks Pilár had gone out of her mind. But, despite this uneasy reflection, his chest expanded with relief.

They had little further conversation; Pilár had nothing to say and at no time was Pepe a talker, save with his companions of

the bull-ring. He had never talked to Pilár about bulls, save to say once, in a jovial way, that she must see her first bull-fight after their marriage; there was no point in doing so to one who had never seen a corrida.

As they said good-bye, she pressed a sacred medal into his hand.

'It has been blessed,' she told him. 'Wear it always, and think of'—'me,' he expected her to say, and was prepared with a sufficiently ardent answer, but she concluded—'our Blessed Lord, who died upon the cross to save sinners.'

'You're still angry with me,' he blurted out, in his discomposure.

'Who am I to be angry at another person's sin? You have no notion how vile I am,' she said earnestly. 'We must help one another with our prayers. Don't forget me in yours. Go with God?'

Pepe had dozens of sacred medals, which he had collected with less sense of their mystic significance than of the good luck they might bring him in the ring; but he was quite glad to have another one; he slipped it in his pocket—and, during the course of the day, disposed of it inadvertently to a bootblack; whereafter he suffered much compunction, not because it had been given to him by Pilár, but because he had El Bailarín's superstitious regard for religious objects.

He sought out his father in great dismay when he returned to the Casa del Matador.

'Here's a nice business!' he began. 'Pilár knows about the girl in Sevilla.'

Don José raised an expressionless face from his newspaper.

'Who told her?'

'I don't know. I meant to ask her if the old woman knows as well, but I was so flabbergasted—I couldn't talk to her. I think she's gone crazy. She's different—queer—religious!'

'It is not a bad thing for a woman to be religious,' pronounced Don José. 'She is likely to give her husband less trouble. You who are so often away from home had better thank the saints if she is religious.' He glanced quickly at his son, and asked the

question which was trembling in his mind. 'Does she want to break off the marriage?'

'No, luckily it doesn't seem to have struck her that way.' Pepe grimaced in graceless fashion. 'I can tell you it's not going to be much fun marrying Pilár! It's like marrying a church candlestick and a bag of bones.'

'Gold weighs heavier than bones,' said Don José shrewdly. 'When you wish she weighed more you can remember her dowry-chest.'

The mention of money reminded Pepe that he wished to discuss the topic with his father, but, as though Don José sensed the imminence of a subject which above all others he detested, he rose, put down his paper, and said he was going to see Juan. As he slowly mounted the stairs, his mind was occupied with Pepe and Pilár.

His almost idolatrous love for his son, compounded of so many pure and impure motives that it was impossible to disentangle the one from the other, no longer blinded him to the incompatibility of this projected marriage. With his love for Pepe was bound up his personal vanity, his pride that a son of his should prolong the glories of the name he had himself made famous: and also his tenderness to the small boy who, at so early an age, had become totally dependent upon himself. This tenderness had reached out towards the girl Pepe was to marry, but during the weeks of Pepe's illness he had become increasingly conscious of the fact that the binding of these two beloved beings together was not going to be as simple a matter as he had at first supposed.

His mind moved upon two planes; one it trod with certainty, among familiar standards and ambitions; upon the other it groped with a strange timidity so alien to his nature that he was subconsciously annoyed by it.

Upon the first plane his mind occupied itself with the material benefits that marriage would bring to Pepe: with the enhancement of public prestige which would inevitably be reflected upon himself by Pepe's rise to eminence in his profession; the details

of the parade with which he was so familiar crowded it with a thousand petty and disconnected thoughts in which his own celebrity was mingled with Pepe's, and the pair of them shone side by side with a lustre which vividly recalled the days of his splendour. To obtain this result he was ready to sacrifice every principle he possessed, every friend or acquaintance he had ever made. The lust of power still possessed him—possessed him even more strongly now, in the days when it was denied him. Working upon this plane, his mind told him that Pepe conferred an honour upon Pilár in marrying her, and that she could think herself fortunate in having an opportunity to marry into the family Díaz Marquez.

Upon the second plane he thought confusedly of the girl whose hair he had stroked, upon whose knee his hand had rested, whose lips had caressed his own hand. These physical sensations seemed to have become imprinted upon some interior plasm which was so vital a part of himself that he could not forget them; yet they did not comprise in themselves the whole of his attitude to Pilár. He could not forget, either, that some inner power in her had forced him to confide in her; that he had spoken to her of things which he had not believed to be formulated in his mind. He at once loved and respected the memory of this. And hand in hand with that physical memory of her ran an intellectual memory with which he was not sufficiently familiar to identify it as awe. Awe was associated, in Don José's mind, a little with matters of religion, but mainly with the bull-ring; sometimes it centres upon the matador and sometimes on the bull, according to the degree of nobility in either. But his experience had not taught him to focus it upon a young girl, and his materialism had prevented his transferring it with any profound sense of conviction to religion. Pilár was like a child and like a saint; there was something in her, which he felt at their first meeting, which drew him out of himself, which called upon his own nobility to answer her own. It seemed foolish to think of so young a creature as noble; but there was—he discovered it with surprise—a kind of nobility in youth; there was a nobility in the young



bulls on the ranches, whose liquid gaze carried the promise of all the pride of their maturity; there was nobility in his young son Juan, in the impenetrable secrecy and dignity which sometimes irritated his father because he could not fathom it.

Pepe was not ripe for these things. He wanted to have his cake and to eat it; he wanted a rich wife, one who was virtuous and handsome, and he expected her to combine with these qualities those of the public girls whom he took as his father had taken them before him. Don José's brow knit as he reached the head of the stairs; the thought of Miguel revived; Pepe must be given his word of warning.

Felipa was sitting at her table upon the gallery, darning household linen upon the long frame which had belonged to Doña Laura. Her head was bent; the curve of her long body beautifully expressed the humility of her position in the household; her thread went peacefully in and out with a faint clicking sound. Through the open winds that overlooked the patio, where the curtains of blue and white check hung motionless, came a cooing of the doves which sunned themselves upon the saffron-yellow drainpipe tiles overhead. She gave no sign of observing her master's presence, save by bending a little deeper, in token of respect, over her frame. Don José was surprisedly conscious of a pleasant picture. He paused behind her.

'Don Antonio is having supper with us to-night.'

'Si, señor.'

The back of her fine columnar neck was like amber-coloured marble, and her hair had the sheen of purple grapes. She carried with her always a faint fresh tang of the soil. Don José had become accustomed to it; at first he used to inhale it through his nostrils when she stood close to him. He remembered now that he had a matter to mention to Felipa, and dropped casually into the rocking-chair at the side of the frame. She ceased sewing and looped her needle into the linen; her eyes fixed themselves on his face with attention.

'Have you ever made a *conejo* Santiago, Felipa?' he asked casually.

he had a sense of guilt, an awkwardness not to be dispelled by encountering Pilár's eyes.

'It would seem, father, that such an argument would come better from you, armed with your spiritual authority, than from me.'

'I can employ it——' began Don Antonio. He cleared his throat and drew his legs up, which had been stretched out in front of him, so that his hand, clenched into a plump fist, rested on his knee.

'There is another thing which must be brought before Pepe. It is necessary it should be attended to now, for Doña Mercedes may die at any minute.' Don Antonio's face drew itself into a recriminatory frown, with which he was accustomed to impose his will on the more obstreperous of his flock. Don José saw the frown, guessed in part what it portended, and prepared to be very suave and evasive. But he was greatly offended. A nice way for a man who had been just entertained to a *conejo Santiago* to show his gratitude!

'My son, it is not seemly that, of this vast fortune, the whole should remain in the employment of Pepe for secular purposes.'

Don José sat upright, his face crimson. He had ever been prepared for fault-finding of some sort, but never for an attack on these grounds.

'Its secular employment, as you choose to speak of it, is the whole object of Pepe's getting hold of it!' he cried passionately. 'Listen to me, father, for a minute. Pepe is badly in debt. I am not supposed to know that, but how can I help it? It was the same with me at his age; and where should I have been without my wife's money? I have not the means to back him in the way he needs. I tell you, father, if the sum were three times what it is—and, let me remind you, we don't know yet what that amounts to; I am prepared for any wriggling on the old woman's part—it would not be any more than enough for a young man who has to pour out money like water. When you're a bull-fighter they all have their hands in your pockets—the promoter, the caudrilla, the hotel-keepers, the tailors——'

'Women,' pointed out Don Antonio dispassionately. Don José spread out the fingers of his right hand with the same hypocritical gesture he had employed when Doña Mercedes questioned Pepe's character. 'You have more to do than I, father, with that side of Pepe's life.'

'That is true,' assented the priest. 'And Pepe has been guilty of many sins against the Holy Church; it is not to be expected that the Church should continue to give for ever and to receive nothing in return. And now, under the Republic——'

'I have paid——' began Don José, but the other cut in on him.

'We were talking of Doña Mercedes' money. Let me tell you something that you may take as you please: it is common knowledge among the clergy. Doña Mercedes has for many years been defrauding the Church of its common dues. In leaving her entire fortune to her grand-daughter she continues to do so, and the money, when it comes to your son, is cursed in the sight of God. It won't do a matador much good to play about with cursed money.'

Inevitably all that was superstitious in Don José responded, as it was intended it should, to these words, delivered in the priest's harsh metallic voice. He tapped the ash off his cigar, grinding his teeth in the dark. God knew, a matador had need of all the good fortune that came his way. He had a flashing vision of luck deserting Pepe, of his son being carried from the bull-ring with his inside falling out. *Madre de Dios!* Nausea took hold of him; he paused to conquer it before muttering:

'The usual masses——'

The impersonality of the priest's expression made his face almost fearful. He was fighting from no petty personal motive, but from the infinitely more bitter and formidable one of the Church.

'My son, the usual masses will not save the soul of Doña Mercedes from the purgatory to which it is condemned for her misdeeds. Nor will they remove the curse from the money her grand-daughter inherits. I have talked this matter over with Don Felipe, who is Doña Mercedes' confessor; he tells me his utmost

arguments cannot prevail against her stubborn determination, and we are both agreed that, since the handling of the money will lie with Pepe, he is the one to be approached. It is easy to see the girl won't offer any objections; it wouldn't be very agreeable to her, as a devout Catholic, to think of her grandmother's soul in purgatory, while Pepe is making the money fly!

Two priests, mumbling together how they could defraud his son of his inheritance! Don José could see them at it. He gritted his teeth, but superstition still had him in its grip.

'Then what is it to be?' he muttered.

'Certain moneys to be devoted to the celebration of masses for the dead,' began Don Antonio, with a swiftness that showed he had the whole thing planned out. 'It would be wise to make an investment—it need only be a small one—for that purpose, that the masses may go on in perpetuity—or until the Republicans have ruined Spain!' he added bitterly. 'Others to be offered to the Church in token of repentance on behalf of Doña Mercédes by Pilár Borrás; something for Church charities—in which I hope the poor of my own parish may not be forgotten; the purchase of certain indulgences——'

With difficulty Don José repressed a bellow of exasperation. He felt as though he were stifling. He saw Doña Mercédes' fortune—the greater part of it—vanishing into the rapacious maw of the Church. It was too much! A strangled protestation broke from him; he made a violent gesture. Don Antonio lit another cigar. Don José almost exploded; it was his cigar! The poor of Don Antonio's parish, indeed! And if he were to devote to the poor of his parish the money he spent in a year on tobacco a dozen families might be fed!

Across the now completely dark patio came the figure of a girl of the working classes; her feet, in rope-soled shoes, brought her noiselessly to the two men, who stared at her without recognition.

'*Buenas noches, señores.* I am Isabella, of the Carmen de los Arrayánes. The señora sends you this——'

Don José laid the envelope upon his knees and clapped his hands; Felipa's head appeared through the gallery window; she

was going to bed, for her hair hung in a great black rope across her shoulder. 'Light,' he told her tersely. She found the switch, and the hanging lamp in the middle of the patio broke suddenly into a globe of orange.

'*Vaya usted con Dios,*' said Don José absently to the girl who still lingered before them. Her '*Con Dios, señores,*' floated back across her shoulder as she moved like a shadow to the entrance.

'That means she's not dead yet,' said Don José. He had a reluctance in opening the envelope.

'Open it; it may say she's dying.'

'If she were dying,' said Don José with irritation, 'she would not be able to write letters.'

He was surprised at the vigour of an old woman's writing, until he glanced at the foot of the page and saw the signature which tailed faintly off the edge of the paper; it was in a different hand from the rest of the letter. Doña Mercedes had dictated her letter, as a matter of fact, to the doctor, although Don José, who did not know Pilár's writing, wondered if the girl had written it.

'*Muy señor mio y distinguido amigo,*' wrote Doña Mercedes—through the person of her medical attendant.

'Since I am told that I have not much longer to live, and since I am not satisfied that my grand-daughter, who is the light of my eyes and a veritable pearl in the necklace of the Virgin Mary, should be left uncared for at my death (she having no other relatives save myself to look after her), this is to give you full and formal notice that I withdraw my objections to the celebration of the marriage of your son with my grand-daughter before her eighteenth year. As matters are, I should regard it as a great favour if the ceremony could be hastened forward with no further delay and beg to offer my highly honoured and respected friend the most profound regrets that, in the circumstances, all the arrangements for the ceremony must devolve upon him.'

'And all the expenses, I suppose,' muttered Don José.

'Owing to my sickness' (the letter continued), 'I am unable to undertake the necessary formalities in connection with the conveyance of moneys customarily delivered to the bridegroom at the time of marriage. But, as it cannot be long before the whole of her inheritance comes to my grand-daughter, I throw myself yet again upon the gracious forbearance of the Señor Don José Díaz Marquez——'

Don José's dark, suspicious eye met the priest's.

'How about that?'

Don Antonio shrugged his plump shoulders.

'My son, you are too suspicious. Let me tell you something. Don Felipe told it to me, and there is no harm now in passing it on. Round about Burgos there are estates, held in the name of Vilchez la Mancha, which——'

A smile began to dawn upon the features of Don José, but quickly faded away. So the man from Madrid—or perhaps Gomez himself, who should have known better—had been blabbing. Don José had been careful not to disclose to the priest that he had actually seen Doña Mercedes' will; he had not been averse from doing a little Church-cheating himself, for he had expected some such development when once the estate had been proved, and had hoped to conceal at least a portion of the full amount of Pilár's inheritance. So now he pulled a long lip at Don Antonio.

'Vilchez la Mancha does not constitute a fortune.'

'True, my son, but that is not all.' Don Antonio laid a knowing finger to the side of his long, flexible nose; his close-set eyes twinkled a message into Don José's. 'You needn't try to deceive me,' they said, 'I know all about it.—I am not at liberty to say any more,' he continued aloud, 'and no doubt you know as much about it as I do. The important thing is that we should now get hold of Pepe.'

Don José looked at his watch, and sent a loiterer outside his door to the wineshop, to tell Tomás to go down to the Café de la Alameda to fetch Balarinito.

After long and bitter argument, in which religion and superstition warred with Pepe's furious reluctance to part with a farthing of the money which was coming to him, a compromise was reached. Browbeaten out of his resistance, Pepe gave his solemn promise to devote a third of the fortune to the ends indicated by the priest, who then promised to get into immediate touch with Don Felipe and make arrangements for the wedding to take place on the following day. It would mean an interview with the Bishop, if his lordship could be seen at so late an hour. Both Pepe and his father looked as though they had been wrung out when Don Antonio, rising and looping his cloak over his arm, received his long-haired beaver hat from Don José and departed, lifting two fingers in blessing as he went.

Don José put both hands on the shoulders of his son. His eyes, which were wet, showed an expression of anxious and fatherly love.

'You will have a brilliant success next season, my son.'

'Yes, yes.—Father, it's all perfectly safe, isn't it? The paper you signed—and Doña Mercedes—Gomez has that all right, hasn't he?'

'Of course, of course.'

'And the will? You saw the will?' persisted Pepe.

'Yes,' said Don José. 'I saw the will.' But for a moment a hideous uncertainty, equal to Pepe's swept over him. The next instant he dismissed it.

'Everything to Pilár?'

'Everything.'

Pepe threw off his depression; so long as the money was there he could put up with everything!

'Let's go out and drink, father!'

Don Antonio returned after midnight, having, he said, made all preparations. The Bishop, agreeing that the circumstances were special, and soothed by Pepe's promises, granted a special dispensation for the marriage to take place without further delay. The ceremony was to take place in Don Antonio's church; he had arranged to hear Pepe's confession, and told him he would

be expected to attend the first mass. Pepe had a cold, drowned feeling, as though he had fallen into a well from which no one could rescue him. He was diabolically restless, throwing himself about in his chair, jerking his head and arms, lighting one cigarette after another and throwing them down half consumed. He could not get out of his head the nunlike aspect of Pilár. Well, thank God one went to bed in the dark.

But two things intervened in the sequence so ably planned by those it concerned. Doña Mercedes did not die, and Pilár was discovered stark upright in her bed, so stiff and still that at first Chita, who found her, thought she was dead, and sent Isabella shrieking for Don Felipe. But when Don Felipe hastily arrived, bringing with him a médico, he touched Pilár and pronounced her to be in a trance, the outcome of her rigorous piety, which, as her confessor, he had observed and given thanks for many times during recent weeks. The médico, although a Republican and a sceptic, had nothing to add to Don Felipe's diagnosis, save to give the 'trance' a more professional name. They both agreed that she must not be disturbed, but must be left quietly to recover. Probably, said Don Felipe, she was at that moment in communion with an angel! There was, of course, no question of the marriage taking place immediately. It might even be, he stolidly continued, that it would never take place at all; that she would discover that her true vocation was that of a religious. In any case, her betrothed was not to see her until she sent for him.

Pepe, tearing his hair, down at the Casa del Matador, called upon his own saints for succour, and sought temporal consolation of his father, who was equally perturbed. *Madre de Dios*, was the Church going to get Doña Mercedes' money after all?—Or was he to marry a wife who was liable, in the middle of the most ardent embrace he felt capable of giving her, to go off into trances?

Don Antonio developed a most annoying calm, and told them they must be patient; the solution of these holy mysteries lay with God.



And in the midst of it all, while Doña Mercedes, cheated by her grand-daughter's trance of her privilege of dying, and annoyed to find she no longer occupied the centre of her stage, made one of those swift irrational recoveries common to the very old, Bailarinito went off to Badajoz without seeing his betrothed again.

For the first time in his life he was sick with terror at the prospect of going into the bull-ring.

## Nine

**J**UAN, on horseback, looked from the top of a high hill upon the main road which wound between the olive-groves of San-pedro. As far as the eye could see the olive-groves extended; their long lines of pewter-green across the oyster-coloured earth resembled the tossed coverlet upon some titanic nuptial couch; this way and that the lines ran, in a vast patchwork that clothed the small rounded hills, dwarfed by their background of mountains.

Along the road was slowly travelling an ox-cart. The heavy, mild beasts moved at a timeless pace beneath their wooden yoke; the wagon which they drew, with its arched canvas top, lurched behind them in advance of a cloud of white dust. They were too far away for Juan to hear the noise of the wheels; he sat his horse upon the hill-top, still as a statue, watching. It seemed to him as though the cart and the oxen had some connection with him; he was interested and curious, and his heart gave a tick as the equipage stopped.

Someone was getting out; he saw the driver get down, assist a passenger's laborious descent. A peasant? A short, thick figure stood in the dust of the road, apparently oblivious to the smother raised by the wheels as the cart moved on.

For a few seconds this figure was lost to Juan in the dust; he became aware that he was gripping the rein tightly, that his body was tensed. With a toss of the head he shook himself free of the tension, but not of emotion. What did it mean? What could be the connection between himself and the ambiguous

figure, which now turned slowly, and, with an odd lurching movement which to Juan was painfully familiar, made its way to the side of the road? The lifted shoulder, the dragging left leg that raised a little smoky cloud in the wake of the dwarfed figure, suddenly, unbelievably defined themselves in Juan's mind. Setting the spurs into the mare's sides, he plunged down the rough, falling land, clenching his teeth to endure the pain caused by the jolting to his yet painful ribs.

'Miguel!'

It was unbelievable! Miguel, whom ne had not seen for a year, in secular clothing; Miguel here, in a thin grey alpaca suit, with the sweat channelling lines of dirt down his ravaged face! Miguel lifted his head to his little brother, seated, so brilliant and so beautiful, upon the brown mare, with every line of his face and body quivering with a joy he was unable to repress, and said with a twisted smile,

'Well, you look like a regular *caballero en Plaza*!'

Juan flung himself off the mare and threw his arms about his brother's neck, kissing him, stroking him, beside himself with the delight of having Miguel again.

'Get on my horse,' he was stammering. 'Get up—I'll help you. Come to the hacienda. Oh, Miguel, what are you doing here?'

'I may as well ask what you're doing here,' retorted Miguel, his saturnine features betraying none of his own emotion. Like Pepe, but for a different reason, he looked many years older than his age; his face was grey, almost the same colour as the cloth of his suit, which Juan now noticed was stained and threadbare in places, and dragged badly across Miguel's crooked spine; it had very evidently not been made for him.

'No, but I'm here after my accident,' said Juan hurriedly. 'Miguel! Something is the matter. Where is your sotana? What are you wearing those clothes for? You must tell me.'

'All in good time,' grunted Miguel, and dropped on the ground, as though incapable of walking farther.

'At least come to the hacienda!' implored Juan.

'What?—And meet my good monarchist uncle?—I'm all right. The sun is hot: I could do with a drink.'

'There's always water in a stone jar in the patio,' coaxed Juan. Paying no attention, Miguel looked about him.

'There—over yonder; under that clump of trees. Let's go and sit there. And you can tell me what you've been up to.'

'Lean on my shoulder,' said Juan. They went slowly across, the mare following, swishing her tail to keep off the cloud of flies that hovered about her. Miguel moved in a crab-like fashion, dragging the weight of his palsied leg, swinging his free arm to urge his body forward. The sound of a stream gave Juan an idea, and, when Miguel was seated under the tree, he descended into a little gorge and filled his hat full of the icy water. When he returned, Miguel, with an expression of peace in his eyes, was leaning against the tree-trunk, looking away at the olive plantations which described their hypnotic pattern of divergent lines as far as eye could see.

'Is all that Sanpedro?' he enquired, when he had taken a drink of the water. While Juan answered, he dipped his face in the remainder of it; Juan thought how funny he looked, with his face in the hat and his hair hanging over his ears! How unlike Miguel!

'Yes,' answered Juan. His eyes exchanged a look of understanding with Miguel's when the latter raised his face, dripping, from the hat. '*Muy bonito*,' he said softly.

'And now tell me what you're doing here,' said Miguel.

It was, Juan knew, worse than useless to question Miguel until such time as he thought fit to reveal his purpose in coming. He flung himself full length on his back in the shade, clasping his hands beneath the nape of his neck. The blue of the sky, the green of the leafage—already turning towards autumn—and his joy in having Miguel, merged themselves into one mist of ineffable content. And there was a new, delicious element in their companionship; since last seeing his brother he had, in a sense, grown up. He was conscious of being older, more on a level with Miguel than he had been the last time they were together. Without his knowing it, the eyes of Miguel were upon him; taking

in all the youthful grace of Juan, his delicate features, the rich brown with which, in a few weeks, the Andalusian sun had coloured his face; comparing without bitterness—for he was used to it—all the beauty that was Juan's with his own marred frame. His face of an old man came between Juan and the blue sky as he asked drily:

'Well, what did you do it for?'

Juan twisted his head sideways and screwed up his eyes tightly.

'I don't know what you mean,' he said deceitfully; but he was smiling, for he knew very well: and he knew that, even had he desired to do so, he could conceal nothing from Miguel. Miguel was the mistress of his soul, its curious complement: Miguel, who now was laughing, and leaned forward to thrust a finger into Juan's ribs. 'Ooh! Don't do that! That's the side——'

'I suppose you were trying to kill yourself,' commented Miguel, allowing his body to drop again against the tree-trunk. He spoke in a curious, impersonal voice, as though Juan had a perfect right to do what he liked in this matter.

'No! No, I was not!' denied Juan violently, and this time he was speaking the truth. 'But sometimes, afterwards, I wished I had!—You know the Christ that hangs on the wall at the foot of my bed? You know the way its arms are spread, so you can see the pain in every muscle, and the drag on the ribs, and the mouth fallen open? When the pain was bad, that—that came away from the cross; I could feel it; it came close to me—as close to me as you are—bigger than a man; and all its pain was added to mine, and I knew it had my pain to bear as well as its own. And when the pain went, it went too—back to the wall—taking my pain with it——'

'Pull yourself together,' said Miguel roughly. 'A fractured rib isn't as bad as all that.'

'Two fractured ribs,' said Juan; but a smile slid from under the fringes of his eyelids at Miguel.

'What a fool you are, little brother!' There was so much tenderness in Miguel's voice now that the harshness of the words became a caress. 'Come, tell me how it happened.'

'I fell——'

'On purpose,' prompted Miguel.

'How did you guess?'

'I know you're goat-footed, don't I? And haven't I seen you standing on the parapet of the mirador, looking down on the roofs; with nothing but air between you the floor of the patio?'

'I haven't confessed yet to Don Antonio.'

'It's not more than a matter of six *Aves* and six "paternosters," if you didn't mean to kill yourself,' said Miguel, with a short laugh. 'But you might have done, you know, and then what would have become of you?'

'I swear to you, Miguel, I didn't mean to kill myself; only to hurt myself a little.'

'There are easier ways of doing that,' commented Miguel drily. 'You could have slashed yourself with a knife, or got someone, to twist your arm until it broke. Those are easier and less risky ways—if you happen to be seeking the experience of pain. Since when did martyrdom begin to appeal to you—you who are soft like a little rabbit, and used to shriek so pitifully when Pepe pulled your hair or kicked you on the sly?'

'You are mocking me,' scowled Juan. 'Those things were when I was a child.'

'And what are you now? No man is a man until he has adjusted himself to the business of living.'

'Is that hard to do?'

'Some succeed in doing it; some do not to the day they die. Their hair goes grey, it falls out; they lose their teeth; the wrinkles pucker their faces and their muscles shrivel away—but they are still children, because they have not learned the only thing that matters——'

'And that is——' prompted Juan eagerly. He felt that Miguel held a secret in his hand: a secret which he was about to impart to him, and then a wonderful thing would happen; he would become wise, he would be able to 'adjust himself', in the way Miguel said.

'Never mind,' said Miguel disappointingly.

'Does our father know it?' asked Juan, surprising even himself with the question. Miguel's eyes narrowed; his head moved slowly from left to right.

'How should he? El Bailarín'—it was always thus that Miguel spoke of Don José—'is a blind man. He has been blind all his life. That is why he is unhappy without knowing it. He has done everything in blindness; he has loved his women, he has killed his bulls—in blindness. It takes courage to do that. Yes,' said Miguel ironically, 'El Bailarín is a brave man. A brave, blind man.'

The tears came trembling upon Juan's eyelashes; he had never loved his father so passionately as during the days since his accident; never so marvelled at the patience and tenderness with which Don José bore with his moanings. How mean an injury his must appear to a man who had ridden on the bull's horns! And his love was mingled with an infinitely painful agony of mind, for he knew that he had deceived his father in a base and ignoble fashion, in a manner that would surely transcend Don José's powers of forgiveness if he were ever to discover the truth. It wounded Juan that Miguel should speak of his father with this kind of slighting pity.

'You must do your best not to be blind,' Miguel was saying, in a constrained kind of voice. 'To go through life only half conscious of all that it offers you is the act of a fool. It is the fool or the coward who shuts his eyes; and after a while it becomes habitual. Then comes a time when, if one would see, one cannot; and that is the end. The human mind is the greatest thing that was ever created: don't you forget that. And the human mind is at last showing us that a blind faith is not enough.'

'Faith?' said Juan doubtfully; it was a word his mind connected with religion.

'Faith in oneself, in one's power to be, one's power to act. It's not enough to believe that one *can*; one must examine the source from which the power comes, so as to be able in time to exploit its utmost resources.'

'Do they teach you that at the Sacro Monte?' asked Juan, very much impressed. Miguel's face, which had been working with animation, became blank as the tree-trunk against which he was leaning.

'You haven't yet told me about this trick of yours.'

'I jumped over a wall,' muttered Juan.

'What wall?'

'A wall of the Alhambra.'

'*Nombre de Dios*, where?' exploded Miguel.

Juan explained to him; the two boys knew the interior of the Alhambra as they knew their own home; it was in the ruined part, under the Torre de la Vela. The spate of Juan's words quickened as he went on with his confession.

He had got up on that morning feeling sick and faint, after a nearly sleepless night. The bull-fight that Sunday was at Malaga. Don José and two of his friends were taking a car; they were starting about twelve. Juan was to go with them. During the mass his knees had shaken so much that he had almost rolled over as he received the Blessed Sacrament; he was guilty of paying no attention to the voice of the priest; he could think of nothing but the ordeal before him, and every detail of the scene enlarged itself and presented itself to his imagination in the brightest colours.

He tried to think of the valour and grace of the matadors, of the sculptured beauty of the cape-work, of the artistry of the banderilleros, with feet together and bodies curved backward like drawn bows, planting the darts; of the elegance of a clever handler of the muleta, and the courage of the bull. And his imagination would only provide him with the most obscene and filthy incidents, such as are never seen by the general public, which take place behind the ring.

After the mass he went up to the Alhambra. There was no sun that morning; there was no freshness in the air; every now and then a gust a wind scurried among the dust; no people were about. It felt, said Juan, like the morning after a murder. A kind of blank aftermath of evil. His terror grew upon him; and



suddenly he knew that, whatever came of it, he could not go to Malaga with his father. Naturally he thought of suicide; there had been many suicides in the Alhambra.

He pictured himself going up to the top of the Torre de la Vela; closing his eyes, he experienced that dizzying attraction known to many—that desire to launch himself into space, to spread his arms out and give himself to the air. First one would go smoothly, like an airplane; and then, as one reached some limit of equilibrium, a control would go, and one would whirl and flutter like a dead leaf, until one struck the rocks below.

Two things prevented his putting this theory into practice; first, visions of an explicit purgatory drifted through his mind, for to commit suicide was, according to his teaching, to exchange one torment for another infinitely worse; and, secondly, the pain he would be inflicting upon his father presented itself vividly to his mind. Slowly an alternative shaped itself in his brain.

Not death, but something near it; an injury which would prevent the repetition of his ordeal—for a while, at any rate. And, before he had time to flinch before the prospect of physical pain, he had done it. . . . A tree broke his fall, and at the same time accomplished what the drop—of ten or fifteen metres—might have failed to do.

‘What is it you can’t stand about the bull-fight? Is it the bull? Or is it the man? Or, like foreigners, don’t you like seeing the bull hit the horse?’

It was none of these things, he said. It was the part that took place out of the bull-ring, in the corridors of the behind-scene. It was the idea that so much had to be broken and degraded and made vile to furnish a spectacle for a mob that never realized anything but what went on under its eyes.

‘Would they like it more or less if they did, do you suppose?’ interrupted Miguel ironically. ‘Do you think people who go to watch a drama would appreciate it any better if they could see the men working the lights at the side, and the leading actress pinning false hair on her head before she went on the stage?’

The art of the spectacle lies in making the spectators forget everything but the show itself.'

The cases were not the same, Juan maintained—feeling his bosom swell that he was thus capable of supporting his share of an argument with Miguel. The spectacle of the theatre is not furnished by scenes such as go on behind the bull-ring: of horses having their insides stuffed with sawdust, of men dying under the anæsthetic——

'And neither,' said Miguel, smiling his twisted smile, 'is a meal, I suppose, furnished by the cook's slicing the heads off live ducks in the courtyard, and watching them flopping about headless until they drop dead? You've watched that often enough. According to you, every meal one eats is a massacre, and the business of getting it ready a degrading one.'

'You've got to eat to live,' Juan defended himself.

'And the bull-fight is a part of the life of Spain,' retorted Miguel triumphantly. 'Don't you remember what Perez da Vaiga said?—that in watching the bull-fight every Spaniard strengthens his national characteristics: his love of valour, his appreciation of the artistic, his personal honour? It is because the things you talk about do not themselves contribute to these qualities that they take place secretly, though they are a necessary part of them. Every act has an æsthetic and a non-æsthetic side; the æsthetics are meant for the public, the non-æsthetics for the initiates who provide the scene.—I don't suppose you know what I'm talking about.'

'Most of it. But——'

'And that part about the Greek playwrights and Belmonte—do you remember that? To understand fully all the bull-fight stands for in the life of Spain you've got to accept what goes on behind as well as in front of the bull-ring. If you can't do that you're missing out an act of a sacred drama—the part reserved for the actors themselves: their own mystery, initiation, and preparation for the moment of truth, when they put everything to the test.'

'Is that the way matadors think?' asked Juan, in surprise.

'Matadors don't think. The ones who think are the intellectuals who analyse the whole thing and write about it in language that makes one bull-fighter nudge another and say, "What the hell does this mean?" when somebody shows him a page in a book. They—the intellectuals, I mean—are damned souls; they're an eye and a brain, and no more. The real aficionado is the man who pays five pesetas for his grada, and weeps tears of sacred joy because his favourite matador performs a beautiful suerte. Happy fool! He doesn't know what the long words mean either, but he thanks God for showing him especial favour in allowing him to see something that makes him more of a man than he was before.'

The words, coming out like a knife, made Juan more sure than he had been before that there was something very much the matter with Miguel. He had never talked so much, never with such violence, and never upon such a subject, as long as Juan could remember. The words seemed to boil out of him; to Juan, who understood about a third of them, they conveyed a meaning less as words than as a revelation of something that was going on in Miguel's soul.

Juan had not the least idea of what Miguel felt about becoming a priest; the subject had never been mentioned between them.

There was something about Miguel which reminded Juan always of an old tree, grey of trunk, blasted and twisted, holding to life by the faintest of perceptible threads. Now a dazzling perception came to him of the bitter but powerful life that existed beneath Miguel's impassivity. He noticed his brother's hands, locked round his knees; how the black hairs ran down from the edge of his sleeve to the first joints of his powerful fingers; he remembered the extraordinary strength of Miguel's arms, that could raise and support the dead weight of his pitiful body for long periods. At present he was unshaven; a harsh growth blackened his jaw, and emphasized its force. There was nothing, felt Juan, *priestly* about Miguel; a pagan aroma hung about him, threatened at any moment to change him into a creature as primitive as those which the peasants swore ran about

at night in the olive groves. Words shot out of Juan's lips before he was aware of them.

'Miguel! You've left the Sacro Monte?'

Miguel looked at his brother strangely.

'Yes.'

'Where are you going?'

'I don't know. Perhaps to Madrid. I've got friends in Madrid.'

'Does our father know?'

'I should say so—by now. I left on Tuesday.'

'And this is Friday! What made you come here?'

'I thought I would like to see you before going away.'

A warm tide of brotherly love surged between them.

'How did you know I was here?'

'El Bailarín wrote, of course, after your accident. He said the doctor had bidden him send you to the sea. Characteristically, economy triumphed over paternal devotion! How do you like being here?'

'Oh, Miguel, I adore it! I would far rather be with Uncle Pablo than at the sea. You have no idea what a marvellous place Sanpedro is. See! It has made me grow—*inches!*' declared Juan, jumping to his feet. The long, slim, lovely body of his brother caused for a moment a spasm to cross Miguel's face. Juan saw it; understood; sank humiliated to the ground. His voice sounded smothered as he asked:

'Aren't you going to be a priest?'

'No.'

'What will Don Antonio say?'

'What does it matter what Don Antonio, or anyone, says, now?'

'Oh, Miguel! Our father! He was so proud of your being at the Sacro Monte! I have failed him—and now you!'

Miguel laughed harshly.

'How simple you are, little brother!'

'Tell me about it,' whispered Juan, closing his eyes.

'I've left the priesthood—to serve Spain. To serve the Republic.'

*'Madre de Dios!'* Juan came out with his father's favourite oath. 'But the Republic is destroying Spain.'

'That's what the priests tell you. Listen to me, and remember what I'm saying. Don Antonio and the rest of his sort stand for all the evil that's been committed, all the wrong that has been done in Spain since Christianity came into the country. You, born in Granada, under the shadow of desecrated walls, should realize that.' Miguel stopped to moisten his lips. 'Spain is a country of dry breasts; its people starve because the milk of the country is drained by its priesthood. Have you ever stopped to think,' said Miguel suddenly, 'that, if the altar in the cathedral was melted down, there need be no more poverty in Granada—no more beggars, no more idiots, no more disease?'

'You mean the Republic will rob the churches?'

'The Republic,' said Miguel, in a loud voice, 'is talking of building a million new schools, to give the people education. What's the good of education to shrivelled bellies? How can brains that are soft with lack of nourishment imbibe learning? The Republic itself has something to learn, I can tell you! The present lot are drunk with power; wait until the next revolution comes along. My party will show them something.'

'Do you belong to a revolutionary party?' whispered Juan.

'My ideas are my own,' said Miguel fiercely. 'The country is cancerous, and the only cure for cancer is the knife. What's the good of a Republic like the present one? Spain has to run red from end to end—like Russia—before the cancer is cut, and burned, out of it. We have suffered!—but not enough. The penalty has to be paid, to the last drop of our blood, before we can accomplish our redemption as a nation. And these fools can't see it! Their purblind eyes won't carry them as far as Russia. They can't see that it was pure idealism that drove Russia through her hell. They want to accomplish a miracle without taking their gloves off! They believe that a millennium can be brought about by the simple means of politely requesting a king to quit the country, and making a set of fresh laws——'

'The Republic is ruining us with taxation!' cried Juan, remembering one of Don José's lamentations.

'You poor little rabbit! How you cling to your nest lined with down, like the rest of them!' said Miguel contemptuously. 'You, who, as a poet, should be ready to die for a revolutionary party which would set you free from the persecutions that literature has suffered in Spain! What about Ibañez? How do you like the idea of crawling on your belly to obtain the patronage without which you can't get a line of your writing into print, save in the newspapers?'

'The Republic hasn't done anything to help us yet,' muttered Juan.

'There's a group in Madrid that has got hold of the right notions,' said Miguel quickly. 'They know of me. I'm going to help them. We've got our chance, now the power of the Church is destroyed. Wait till we've driven the priests out, as they did in England.'

'The priests came back; there are quite as many Catholics in England now as there are heretics.'

'But they don't matter politically; they have no power. They only exist there under conditions of toleration. They can come back here as well, when we've taught the people that they have nothing more to fear from them. How much land and house property do you think the monasteries owned?—producing their wine and oil and fruit, and paying not a penny in tax to the country, so they could under-sell their products and ruin the private growers.'

Juan suddenly saw the peaks of the sierras, like dry, pointed breasts; Miguel seemed fearfully right.

'I needn't have gone to the seminario,' continued Miguel, 'but I wanted to know everything; all that there was about it.'

'Won't you be punished for leaving? They may excommunicate you.' Juan looked down at his fingers, which were nervously twisting a blade of grass. Miguel laughed.

'It doesn't matter if they do. Nothing to do with the Church matters any longer. It's an old chattering humbug, an old whore of Christianity, sick with disease, and covering its sores up with

the gold it's raped from its lovers. It's the biggest thing superstition has ever created, and its stink in dying is going to stifle millions. All the heads of my party are atheists. They'll clean up the mess somehow.'

'Are you an atheist?' The whole conversation afflicted Juan with a sense of guilt and fear. Both his father and Don Antonio would surely go mad if they knew that he had lent his ear to such heretical doctrines.

'I am and I'm not. I don't believe in the God of the Church—the God they speak of as "Him." Why should God be "Him"? How should a God have sex, which we are told is something that ceases in the hereafter?—if there is such a thing as a hereafter. And why should the sex be masculine? Why not hermaphrodite—the mystical combination of the two, that fills the normal human being with hate and horror, because he senses its potentialities and fears them?'

'Because men are stronger than women,' answered Juan, with prompt conviction. Miguel laughed shortly.

'That's what you say. Wait until you've had dealings with a woman yourself.'

The overwhelming conviction that Miguel, in spite of every physical and moral circumstance that seemed to forbid it, had passed through the experience which was as yet unknown to him, seemed to open a gulf between them, and left Juan on a peak of intense loneliness.

'Wait till you know how a woman can drain the power out of a man who loves her: how, in the very instant of complete domination, he feels himself bereft of everything; he becomes weak, weak, little, less than himself, for a minute or two. All of man's arrogance is based on his resentment of that minute when the woman is strong and he is weak. Weaker than well-water. Wait until you have known that.'

'If that is what having a woman does to one, why does one do it?' muttered Juan.

'Because of God! Because there's a force that drives every living thing to propagate. Get that act—the act of creating life

—cleared of all the sentiment and pomp and emotion with which human beings have surrounded it, and what is it?—Man's blind obedience to a force more powerful than himself. In thwarting it, you thwart the spirit of life, and pay for it sooner or later. The Church thwarts, or tries to thwart, it among its priests, by binding celibacy upon them. How many of them do you suppose abide by their celibate vows? Either they break them frankly, or they get round them by dirty little expedients, by substitutes for the brave act of sex. The power that bids a man find a woman is stronger than all the threats of the Church. No man is meant to waste his manhood, whose consummating act is the act of sex.'

Juan trembled; felt little, mean, and childish. Was not this, in substance, what Tomás had said to him? He longed suddenly to make a complete confidant of Miguel; to tell him about his experiences at Sanpedro, where the big, sweaty country-girls had terrified him with their advances. What did it mean, that terror—since, according to Miguel, the natural forces of mankind favoured the experiment which he fled from?

'And, if he wastes it,' went on Miguel, 'the Power will get him in the end. The Power which is God. Anything which is compulsive, not to be gainsaid, is God. Don't you see? It's not *Him*, it's *It, It, It!*' He struck the ground violently; his face was suffused with crimson, even his eyeballs seemed to Juan to have caught the fiery glow; he looked as Don José looked in a passion. 'It! It takes more courage, doesn't it, to accept an *It* in the place of a *Him*? There's something preposterous, inhuman, and impersonal about an *It*, that sends the weak-minded human being cringing away. *Courage*, little brother, is the only thing that counts in a man's life!'

Dragging his body along the ground, Miguel began, almost insanely, to fondle his brother; he stroked Juan's hands, his face, his hair; all the time he continued to pour out a stream of words that cascaded upon Juan's mind until the boy felt stunned by them.

'No wonder the Church has always insisted upon this personal aspect of God, which was so much more comprehensible to the



poor and ignorant!—inventing histories about it, giving it human shape—even insisting upon human relationships for it. And, as a last outrage upon the minds that Power created, it bade folk love it! Was ever anything so mad? Do you “love” electricity? Do you give thanks to a thunderstorm? Of course not; because those things aren’t made personal to you. Electricity was not delivered to the world through the body of a Virgin. But I tell you that is Very God Itself! In a flash of lightning, in the flame above a volcano, man can see God.’

‘You must not say such things—they’re blasphemous,’ stammered Juan, not looking at Miguel, whose hands now fastened upon his thighs with a hard magnetic grip that sent fire through his body.

‘Listen, *niño*; you must listen to me. I have come such a long way, and it was not easy, because I felt I must say these things to you before I went away. I must not leave you entirely to the power of the priests, because you are my brother and I love you; because you have a mind tender like a sprig of mimosa, and because you are cursed with the power of thinking.

‘You’re making things so hard for yourself, *niño*, if you only knew it. Why will you not be brave and look at life through your own eyes, instead of through a confessional window? There is such a lot of fear in human beings. The Church has always recognized that, and, instead of trying to get rid of it, it has fostered it for its own ends.’

‘No, no, Miguel! That’s not true. I can remember, not so very long ago, Don Antonio preaching about the sin of fear——’

‘You mean, he said that you had to say your prayers and transfer your fear to your patron saint, who is a Popish invention; who is, through your religion, a part of yourself; so, in shifting your fear to him, it is still a part of yourself, anæsthetized, but always liable to wake up and betray you again!’ The fearful fondling, in which Juan no longer felt his brother but some terrible stranger, began again. ‘Why don’t you just trust to Power, little brother? Power which will never fail you because it’s always there, clean and clear and strong, in spite of all the foulness and

impurity that's been heaped on to it? Think, little brother! A Power clean, strong and pure, not to be bought by the Church's indulgences!

The hands ceased their movement; Miguel spoke almost calmly.

'Who but a fool would talk of such a Power as Him? Fools need to delude themselves with the idea of a personal God for the sake of His "kindness." When is God kind? Look at me, and ask yourself, when is God kind?' He laughed. 'Why should God be kind? How can He be kind without favouring some and wronging others? Let mankind give up the sentimental search for kindness and accept instead an immaculate impartiality. How bitter I might be, if I believed that a personal God had, out of malice or caprice, created this miserable body of mine! But one cannot bear a grudge against a thing that Is, that cannot be moved by prayers nor curses. It is several years now since I was relieved of the burden of my bitterness; since I found out the truth of things; and since I learned to smile at El Bailarín, because out of his vanity he truly believes that God has thought to punish him, through me, for acting in a certain way when he was a young man!

'All that the human soul requires is to acknowledge Power, to accept it fully in all its manifestations, and to study to adapt himself to it as intelligently as he can, so that he makes full use of all the advantages it confers upon him: not opposing his puny strength to its progress, for in that way he will most certainly be crushed: not suffering himself to be whirled by it blindly, so that he is stunned and unaware of the experiences he is going through. Presently he'll be earth, and then grass; an olive-tree will grow out of his bowels, and the work of propagation will go on in its branches.

'The true God-function is to benefit the world at large: not, at the instance of a mumbled prayer or two, to waste itself upon an old woman's withered arm, a matador's syphilis. Those things come because of things that people have done, or their forefathers have done. God's not responsible for this pitiable mess that is

I: my father made me like this, because he had no idea of adapting himself to the Power, but suffered himself to be driven by it.

'For the love of life get the idea of rewards and punishments out of your brain, so far as a personal God is concerned. There is no reward, and no punishment save the natural consequences of your own and other people's doings.

'Little brother, some day you will have to die. Don't you think it will be a finer thing to die in your own strength than to go out "fortified by the rites" of a Church that is essentially corrupt, holding on to the hand of a mystical God that man's fear, and not his intelligence, created?' His voice deepened, passionately, and he used a word that had a special significance to Spaniards. 'Wouldn't you rather die in your own *pundonor* than trusting to a priest's?'

Juan gave a deep, shuddering sigh.

'But if it is as you say—if there is no God but Power—what is right and what is wrong?'

'Right,' said Miguel, 'is your duty towards your neighbour; and wrong is every time you betray him, through your own body or his. It is very simple, really . . .' As though he were coming out of a trance, Miguel's voice trailed away; he looked at Juan as though he saw him for the first time, and, wiping from his brow the sweat with which it was beaded, he gave a strange, shy smile. 'But I think, perhaps,' he said, in his ordinary voice, 'you are not yet old enough to practise all this. I would not have talked to you about it, but I may be away for a long time, and, in that, something may happen that will cut the foundations from under you, so that you have nothing left, unless you have learned by then to understand the meaning of Power.'

'What good is it to me—a coward?' cried Juan bitterly.

'You think too much of your cowardice,' said Miguel quickly. 'Oh, I know about it, although you have never spoken of it to me until this day. Every man is not born to kill bulls, although you will not get El Balarín to see that. I——' He broke off, biting his lip.

Suddenly Juan beheld, as through an open doorway, the secret frustration of Miguel's life.

'Miguel! You wanted to be a matador!' he breathed.

Miguel laughed, made a gesture with his right hand.

'If the limbs don't go with the heart, what's the use of whining over it? I'd have been a good matador; a better one than Pepe. But I happen to have a hunchback and a palsied leg! So I must console myself with philosophizing upon the bull-fight.'

'Where are you going from here?' muttered Juan; he strove to regain, as Miguel had apparently regained, the normal; but he felt as though half of his brain was stunned. Miguel had challenged all his beliefs, and, in the glare of Miguel's blazing torch, it was difficult to avoid seeing what pasteboard pretences most of them were. The Church and the monarchy—very nearly synonymous in Spain—had held his romantic allegiance since his childhood, and his mental development was not yet sufficiently advanced for him to relinquish either without a qualm, even at the bidding of Miguel. 'And *how* are you going?' He could not conceive how Miguel could cover on foot the kilometres that lay between Sanpedro and the nearest railway station.

'I've got a friend who is going with me to Madrid; he lives not far from here. His father knows Uncle Pablo, but I've warned Ramon to say nothing about this to him. Sanpedro would be too hot to hold a republican! I would not put it past Uncle Pablo to shoot me at sight, if he knew my political opinions.'

Juan, too, thought this was not unlikely; Pablo Díaz Marquez was a monarchist of the old school, who made no bones about boasting over his share in the escape of Don Juan March to Gibraltar.

'I'll go down the road to the fonda; it looks a scabby hole, but it will do until Ramon turns up with his father's car and takes me away.'

'You must ride my horse, Miguel,' said Juan; he called the mare, which came, docile as a dog, to nuzzle his hand. 'Isn't she beautiful? I have learned to ride very well since my ribs got better.'

It was very difficult to get Miguel into the saddle, where he crouched like a dusty sack, looking down at Juan with a smile in his sad, wise eyes. The mare moved restlessly, and Juan spoke sharply to her.

'She's ashamed of carrying me,' said Miguel. 'I don't blame her.' The mare moved now with an infinite gentleness, stepping down on the dusty road, Juan at the stirrup. Suddenly Miguel laughed.

'Do you remember Don Antonio's Fandanguillo? A man can't be altogether bad if he can write songs for men to sing.' At his harsh and tuneless voice the mare pricked up her ears.

*'Yo la saco to's las dias  
Mi jaca castana, al campo.  
Yo la saco to's las dias.  
Lo voy cantando un fandango  
y se me guea dormia . . .  
. . . dormia pero galopando!'*

A cripple on a loitering horse, singing of the days when he gallops his brown mare in the country, with a song on his lips and a dream in his heart. . . .

When they came in sight of the fonda, Miguel said:

'You'd better not be seen with me; you must help me down.'

The only way to help him, Juan discovered, was to put his arms round Miguel and lift him bodily to the ground. This cost him a good deal of pain in his still strapped-up ribs, and dyed his cheeks with deep shame, not for himself, but for Miguel, that his infirmity should subject him to such humiliation: not only at the hands of strangers, whom he often had to ask for help, but from his younger brother. However, Miguel gave no signs of embarrassment, and the act was satisfactorily accomplished.

They embraced, and stood for a moment holding each other's hands; Juan muttered a 'Go with God' that brought a smile to Miguel's lips.

'You're all under the thumb of the priests,' he said scornfully, but not unkindly. 'El Bailarin, who does not dare to live in the

style he could afford for fear the Church finds out how rich he is; Bailarinito, who won't go into the ring without a string of medals round his neck. Bailarinito's a rotten matador—yes, he is! We hear things, even up at the Sacro Monte. I pity El Bailarín when he finds out about Bailarinito. And you, who fear everything! You all believe in God, and the Church, and the priests. I believe in nothing, and I am afraid of nothing; because I have found out how to live with the Power which is the only director of human ends.'

He stepped back a pace, and made a motion to Juan to mount the horse. Ashamed, yet glad to show what a good seat he had, Juan climbed into the saddle; he could not yet vault up, as his uncle did, because of his ribs, but he gained his seat, and sat there, looking like a grandee, with a hand on his hip. His head felt hot and light, his chin quivered, but he smiled, through his tears, at Miguel.

'In a year or two you'll have learned sense, and you'll come out with us, and help us to burn Spain!'

Juan shook his head, smiling.

'No; but I might write a poem about burning Spain!'

'That will do,' said Miguel, nodding. 'The revolution will need its poets. Yes, I said you looked like a *cabellero en Plaza*,' he added. 'You'd make a fine picturesque bull-fighter! All the English and Americans would fall for you before you so much as picked up the muleta. It's a thousand pities you have no inclination that way.'

With these last words Miguel started his shuffle towards the fonda. Too tactful to watch his brother's painful progress, Juan trotted a little way back before turning to wave. Would Miguel wave as well? He had nearly reached the blue-green clump of cactus that masked all but a small white patch of the fonda.

Miguel did not wave.

## Ten

**P**ILÁR'S trance was, as trances go, a perfectly genuine affair. Doña Mercédes, in accusing her of pretending it in order to postpone her marriage, was doing the girl injustice. Pilár's morbid, sacrificial spirit, partly the result of her unnatural upbringing and the teachings of Don Felipe—an old-fashioned, mystic priest, with his head as full of miracles as a pomegranate of seeds—had actually achieved some sort of crisis on the night when her grandmother informed her that she was to marry Pepe Díaz immediately. Nor was it all morbidity. We have already seen that Pilár was, through her mother, a natural victim of the occult, and this, the supreme self-abnegation demanded by her grandmother, carried with it the authority of an angelic command. So near to death was Doña Mercédes believed to be, that Pilár, kneeling beside her bed, visualized an angel using as his mouthpiece those frail and hollowed lips that the breath puffed faintly outwards with Doña Mercédes' whispered words.

She had, since her childhood, given an implicit obedience to her grandmother; that was a part of Don Felipe's training. When she retired to bed, at two in the morning, Chita having relieved her watch beside the sick woman, she was the meek, self-dedicated victim to her grandmother's will.

She was very tired; also, without knowing it, she was hungry. Her mania for fleshy mortifications had led her to deny herself the common comfort of her bed. Pilár's bed was a great square frame of wood, whose tester had borne, for some years after she took possession of it, the tattered remnants of magnificent

drapery. The continual falling of dust and powder from these hangings had, however, forced her, with Maria's help, to drag them down, and they were burnt in the garden; a proceeding upon which the sole comment of Doña Mercédes had been: 'You are too impatient; given another twenty years, they would have crumbled away decently of themselves.'

Now the bare skeleton of the posts reared itself over her head and she lay upon the wood itself, for at night she removed the ancient mattress, and, rolling the linen sheet about her like a shroud, had schooled herself to sleep straight and stiff as an effigy. She kept these devotional acts modest and secret, even from Chita, scrupulously replacing the mattress and smoothing the linen over the bed before she unlocked her door in the morning. On this occasion, however, in her weariness she forgot to lock her door.

She had put out her candle; she was sitting upright on her wooden pallet, saying her last Hail, Mary, when the thing began to happen. She felt a curious lightness in her body, almost as though it were floating above the bed, and, at the same time, an uncertain, tremulous, dusky gold began to spread itself about the room. It was the colour of dark honey, of altar-lights seen through a haze of incense. And in the midst of the light appeared, obscurely at first, but gathering distinctiveness from the radiance itself, so that it seemed itself to be built of light, a winged figure. . . .

She sat upright; she spread out her hands to receive the sacrament of initiation which was offered. There was no sound; but it was as though lips were laid upon her brow; as though through the lips came a thin arrow of thought, which penetrated, took possession of her soul. . . .

Questioned by her confessor, Pilár said that she had no desire to enter a convent; she had to marry Pepe Díaz. It had been revealed to her, she said, in her trance, that this was indeed, not only the will of Doña Mercédes, but God's will; that she was appointed by the Blessed Virgin Mary to become Pepe's means of grace.



'All very well to say that; who's responsible for the delay, save yourself?' snorted Doña Mercédes, present at this conversation.

It so happened that Pepe was now booked for a round of ferias and smaller bull-fights which would keep him away from Granada for a good many weeks. It was discussed whether they should all go to whatever town Pepe was appearing in, and get it over immediately. Don José, called in on the conference, was all for this; but the doctor was adamant in forbidding travel to Doña Mercédes, and, now that she had recovered, the old lady was not inclined to be balked of the amusement of witnessing her grand-daughter's wedding.

'Well, well, it may all be for the best. Now that I am about again, you can get on with your sewing. How many chemises have you ready, I should like to know? How many shifts? I'll be bound you haven't marked the linen I've given you, nor even counted it.'

Pilár was sitting at the end of the room, sewing; the stream of white linen flowed to the right and the left of her; she held it up to her bosom and sewed with slow rhythmic movements of her right hand; you could have set music to her movements; you could have painted her, not as a bride, but as one of the ministering women, preparing the garment for the Descent from the Cross.

The room where they talked was packed with old women; Don José was the only man of the company; his fine, sensitive nostrils quivered at the scent of frowsty clothing and ageing flesh; outwardly composed, inwardly he shuddered away from it. They had their heads on one side, like aged, moulting parakeets, they paid him outrageous deference, stroked him with the impalpable lascivious fingers of their moribund coquetry. Cackle and whisper and rustle; smell of camphor, of perspiration, of decay. Not for many years had he experienced so violent a desire to rush out and steep himself in the warm, firm flesh of a young and healthy woman.

Pilár sat at a distance, pursuing her sacramental task with her eyes upon the stitches. He kept his own eyes away from her;

he suffered discomfort in her presence, as he well might do, being obliged, under a cloak of propriety, to suffer the indecent advances of the old woman.

The doctor had also intimated, it appeared, although no one paid much attention to him in this connection, that Pilár would be none the worse for waiting a little, until she had fully recovered from her mystical experience.

'Nonsense!' screamed the old duquesa, who sat so close to Don José that her foot, distorted with its bunions, nearly touched his. Inside the patent leather his own foot quivered with apprehension of the contact; he had a dread, like the dread of contracting leprosy, of such a contact. 'Now, isn't that like a doctor? You'd think he'd know better—and he a married man! Let's hope you'll pay no attention to that, Doña Mercedes!'

They all, save Don José, looked impatiently at Pilár, as though they blamed her for cheating them of an experience for which they were all greedy.

'Once upon a time I thought I saw an angel,' began old Doña Paulina, chuckling to herself. 'It was on my wedding-night. I had just got into bed, and you can fancy for yourselves what I was feeling like——' The chuckles spread; there was a murmur of acquiescence; Don José felt their sly glances upon himself. *Madre de Dios!* Was there no decent limit of age to women's desires? Was it to be credited that at some past day those palsied limbs had burned? 'And I was just pulling the sheet up to my chin—thinking it was a great pity he would not see the hand-made lace on my nightgown, which seemed a waste, as it was to be worn in the dark—and an angel appeared at the foot of my bed! At least, I took it for an angel, just for a minute or two, and how I screamed out! Of course it was my husband, and later on—towards morning—I found myself thinking a very odd thing. I thought, if it had been an angel, we should have found his wings very inconvenient in bed!'

'Marry her quick, marry her quick,' nodded old Doña Angela, through the laughter which succeeded this. She was slightly

feeble-minded, and often said things that strangers found embarrassing; the company now hung upon her words, but she turned her head towards Don José and simpered at him, which drew the duquesa into instant competition.

'You know,' said the duquesa, tapping Don José's knee with her fan, 'it is not at all out of the way for a virgin to see visions. When the time comes that a girl should be married she naturally gets ideas in her head.' She tapped her own and nodded with an air of complicity. 'She is not quite herself in any way. There's only one cure for that, you know!'

'A man, a man,' chanted Doña Angela. Suddenly Don José struck himself violently on the brow; he had been for the moment the victim of an appalling hallucination; he had actually seen himself, in a shadowed room, being drawn towards a bed by old Doña Angela, who mumbled through smiling, toothless, but triumphant lips, 'A man, a man!'

As though she felt it had gone far enough, Doña Mercedes, with a sharp glance at him, put in:

'Who ever saw such a bride? She looks more ready for the shroud than the bridal veil!'

They discussed Pilár, he thought, as though she were a doll or an infant. Their remarks pattered like hailstones upon her smooth, meek head, still as ebony. He remembered the day when his hands had made acquaintance of that meek head.

Suddenly all his half-formulated doubts crystallized, and the incompatibility of the projected marriage struck him for the first time with a blinding force. He thought of Pepe as he knew, and loved, him; Pepe, the counterpart of himself at the same age: coarse, lewd, lustful, blind to all save his own interests, the demands of his own body; incapable of a single act of self-denial; incapable, as his father had been at the same age, of love. Just for a second or two the situation seemed to Don José wholly impossible, even sacrilegious; there was something more than meekness in this girl, something that connected her in his mind with his own meagre spiritual experiences: a flash of awe before a cathedral image, an impulse, when in misery, to fling himself

across the knees of some carven madonna, the superstitious need to gabble a prayer with danger staring him in the face.

The impression made upon him by Pilár's devotion was corrupted by his consciousness of her youth and her beauty. He would have felt no uneasiness, such as that which he now experienced, had he been told that Doña Mercédes had seen a vision; he would have lent his grave attention to the matter, paid her a little extra superficial respect on account of it—and dismissed it from his mind. But this girl whom his son was to marry for her money seemed in her youth and purity to have some kinship with the holy saints to whom, let it be admitted, Don José had not paid too much attention; calmness flowed from her as it flowed from the painted madonnas in the oratories of the bull-rings; she sewed her linen as though she were preparing to be the bride of Christ, rather than of Pepe Díaz.

Had she been his daughter, Don José would have given her to the convent, with the sure and certain knowledge that by doing so he was enhancing his own chances of salvation. Yet, as Pepe's prospective bride, bringing with her the means of Pepe's material advancement, his mercenary soul knew itself to be unequal to taking upon itself the act of renunciation on his son's behalf. 'God forgive me,' he was muttering under his breath, when all around him rose a flutter of dispersal: the old women were going about their business, Pilár allowed the linen to slip from her knees, played her part in the ceremony of speeding the shadowy guests upon their way; one, half blind; another, even lamer than Doña Mercédes; a third, so feeble that she had to be supported, step by step, up the stairs to the upper hall.

Don José waited, hat in hand, among the remains of Doña Mercédes' hospitality: the stale, sweet cakes, the empty coffee-cups, and scattered crumbs which, presently, would lure creatures from the cracked walls and flooring that would leave the carpet cleaner than a careless servant could sweep. Fastidious as he was of his surroundings, he did not notice these things, his mind being occupied with Pilár. He noticed, as Pepe had done, the unnatural transparency of her face, and her abnormal thinness,

but, unlike Pepe, they did not revolt him. Her eyes like silver, her mouth of a budding rose, and the almost imperceptible thrust of her breasts under her dress's thin material confused themselves in his mind with her tranced calm. Smiling, he held out his hand, and she laid hers within it. His smile faded, he muttered a farewell and hurried out into the sunlight. In the act of taking her hand, he knew he had betrayed her; it was like the betrayal of a child.

'Now you are to eat and eat!' Doña Mercédes was saying. 'There is to be no more of this nonsensical fasting. God have mercy on us! As though there weren't enough fast days already! The Holy Virgin herself must have seen to it I didn't die before you had finished making a fright of yourself.' Her voice was thin and querulous; she was much enfeebled by her illness; her head never ceased its palsied motion, and her lower lip hung away from the shrunken gums that no longer supported her denture. Pilár paused, needle once more in hand, to turn upon her grandmother a look of impersonal sweetness.

'It is time you had a new dress, grandmother. See here, and here—you're almost in rags!' She bent over Doña Mercédes to re-knot the dingy scarf of black lace that concealed her withered, craw-like throat. The bending position caused the bosom of her own gown to fall away from the white flesh, through which the bones stared in pathetic, immature emaciation.

The harsh exclamation given by Doña Mercédes made her spring back, her hand to her throat, fear in her eyes; but too late to avoid the clutch of Doña Mercédes' hand, which seized her gown, while the other plunged relentlessly into the neck of her bodice, snatching from its hiding-place something that Pilár's hands tried in vain to conceal: a twig of thorn. Doña Mercédes held it out, her own hand shaking with passion: the bloody secret of Pilár's bosom, the tips of the larger thorns moistly pink.

'You must be insane! Did ever one hear of such madness? One would think you were preparing for the cloister and not for a husband! May the blessed saints have mercy upon Pepe Díaz, if this is what you are going to treat him to!'

The two women, locked in their spiritual encounter, heard nothing of Don José's return. He had come back for his walking-stick which he had left beneath his chair. He stood in the doorway, paralysed by the sight before his eyes.

Before either Don José or Pilár could guess her intention, Doña Mercedes clutched hold of the girl's dress and tore it open from bosom to waist. For a lightning flash of time, in which he felt as though he were cloven from head to foot, Don José saw the breasts of Pilár—close white roses, tipped with pink—before her hands flew to cover them and the lacerated flesh in between. Involuntarily he had covered his eyes with his hand, a moment which had nothing to do with desire to save the modesty of Pilár, but which sprang from his dazed conception of the girl as something more than human. He heard Doña Mercedes shrieking at her:

'I hope he thrashes you! I hope he takes the knotted rope to you! After all I've done—after all I've endangered for your sake! After putting my soul in danger for you, that's the reward I get!' The rattle of her voice betrayed insanity. She was beside herself with a rage that was half aroused by the girl's beauty and half by its wilful mutilation. A terrible and depraved emotion took hold of her; at that moment that would have liked to have delivered her grand-daughter up to Pepe Díaz and to stand by while he abused her in every possible way.

Don José stood frozen upon the threshold, unable to intervene in this appalling scene. He was, in fact, stunned by it; he could not imagine what it was about; but in his consciousness—although, without seeing him, she had twisted herself round so that she stood with her back to him—were the white roses of the breasts of Pilár.

'Grandmother, don't be so angry. It will make you ill. Grandmother, it isn't an ordinary marriage. Nothing you say can make it one, since the holy saints themselves——'

'You'd take sanctity into the marriage-bed, would you? I hope he strangles you! I hope he beats your body until it is black and blue!' At these words, spoken with an indescribable violence,

Doña Mercédes spat full in her grand-daughter's face. The action, so unexpected, so debased in itself and its intention, drew involuntarily a sharp audible intake of breath from Don José, but neither heard it. Pilár sank to her knees, covering her face with her hands, and Doña Mercédes, exerting the last ounce of her feeble strength, gave her shoulder a thrust that flung her over, before she herself collapsed, exhausted, against the edge of the table.

Don José felt as though he had been turned to stone; he did not know what to do or say. He himself was unused to being gentle with women, but he had never seen a respectable woman treated in such a fashion before. Male gallantry, moreover, seldom runs to intervention in women's quarrels, and there was, about the present one, something he could not define, some dark current of latent evil running beneath its surface that atrophied his powers of invention. His common sense told him that Doña Mercédes' violence could not have been attended by much physical pain for Pilár, and pain which was not physical baffled him, deprived him of his usual intelligence. The course he took was an ignoble one, but inevitable to a man of his temperament. Having made sure that neither of the women had observed him, he turned and tiptoed from the house.

The beads of sweat perled his forehead, and he mopped them with his handkerchief, as he went down the Alhambra hill. He walked with less than his usual precision, with the uncertain gait of a man who has just witnessed a martyrdom and wonders, a little, where is God, who permits such things to be. And on the sensitive plate of his mind, which bore the imprint of Pilár's face, there moved now the shadow of Pepe's rakehell handsomeness, of his careless, deeply lined face, his dark eyes with the yellowed pupils, the wild flight of his black eyebrows and the flash of his impudent smile.

About that time, Pilár had a strange dream. She was sitting on the terrace overlooking the Vega, late in the afternoon. The air was full of the iridescent dance of winged things, the light

that ebbed and flowed in the infinite variation of Spanish sunlight across the roofs of the town resolved itself, beneath the fringe of her eyelids, into a minute mosaic of tiny golden scales that powdered the ancient stonework with a layer of impalpable confetti. Behind her the myrtles dripped, for Isabella had been spraying them, less for the convenience of her employers than because doing so gave her an opportunity to exchange the romantic overtures of the youths on the farther side of the wall for her own coinage of flirtation. As usual, Pilár had been sewing; she sewed and she prayed, and the two occupations had wrought in her a drowsiness that conquered her industry for the while.

She dreamt that, as she was sitting there, Don José appeared at the door of the house. He was standing there, looking at her with his hat on his head and the butt of a cigar between his fingers. She wondered why he did not come closer, and then she observed that he had a very strange look on his face. He seemed to be in great trouble, which had carved deep lines on either side of his mouth; under the eyes the skin was puffy and discoloured; there was a broken look about him, as though, under the clothes, his body had lost that close-knit tautness which was characteristic of it.

She heard herself say, 'God be with you, Señor Don José.'

Then, in her dream, an extraordinary thing happened. Without replying to her greeting, Don José removed his hat and came and stood in front of her. He stood so close to her that she could see his stomach rising and falling with his breath; she could see his lips moving soundlessly, as though there was something he wished to say, and could find no way of saying it; as though he were seeking for something, and could not find it. And all the time, the look on his face was a look of pain, of inarticulate and half-comprehended pain, which he seemed to be looking to her to solve. She saw that the hand which held his hat was trembling.

He knelt down before her in the dust of the terrace and laid his face in her lap.



It was only then that she remembered she had not moved at his coming; had shown none of the signs of the respect she owed to a prospective father-in-law. But she sat there, with his face pressed into her lap, and it seemed to her that none of those things mattered; she could feel the burning of his face, pressed between her knees.

She had unconsciously removed her hands from her lap as Don José knelt down before her, and she held them now pressed flatly over her breasts; she looked down upon his head as it lay there; the cropped masculine hair thinning a little at the crown, and towards the base of the muscular neck. She had never before experienced, or dreamed of experiencing, such a thing as having a man's head in her lap. It was a contraversion of the masculine idea of strength, pride, and authority which she had imbibed from those with whom she came into closest contact. Tenderness and pity, like twin angels, entered her heart, veiled by a mild astonishment that such a thing should have happened to her.

He asked nothing, she gave nothing that she was aware of, sitting still beneath the myrtles, with the light striking in oblique, visible rays through the dark leaves. But gradually a profound and heavy sorrow, whose object and origin she could not define, stole into her, so that, knowing it, her face became gradually that of Nuestra Señora de las Angustias, tragic with an immortal grief.

Presently he got up, and, without a word to her, put on his hat and walked away, and through the house, and across the lower hall, out at the other side.

This was the curious dream that Pilár had one afternoon as she sat beneath the myrtles. She was positive that it was a dream—until, as she re-entered the house, she discovered the butt end of a cigar smouldering on the path.

It was not a dream. Don José had come to Pilár because, in all Granada, there was not one soul to whom he could entrust the ruin of his pride. He came to her because she knew nothing of him; nothing of the harsh elements from which his own life was woven; and, because of her ignorance, she held his pain in the cool cup of her self, unconscious as a crystal vase.

It was a Thursday, and at the kiosk near the corner of the Gran Via he had bought his usual copy of *El Clarín*. He was more than usually anxious to see it, because Pepe had not sent him a satisfactory account of the fight on Sunday. The truth was that Pepe, feeling that the game was really up this time, had not indulged in any of his usual bombast. He wrote that the bulls were '*bichos*', that they would not '*embiste*', that his head banderillero had let him down. He had, in fact, thought of every excuse that he could possibly proffer for an abominable performance, whose report was certain to get into the Press. He ended by saying that next Sunday he was fighting at Malaga, which was his lucky town; where he had '*cartel*', which is the bull-fighter's word for popularity, and where he was certain of picking up his usual form and making a success which would reinstate him with the Press and the aficionados. His mentioning the Press warned Don José that something had gone definitely amiss this time.

Out of the corner of his eye he noted other people buying their copies of *El Clarín*, and walked hastily away; he did not wish to receive any ill tidings of Pepe in public.

According to a trusted and unprejudiced source, Bailarinito had done well at Badajoz; his performance, said the aficion, reminded them in more than one or two respects of his famous father. Don José's bosom swelled. They were not really alike, for Don José belonged to the old, classical, and strongly conventionalized school, and regarded the post-Belmontists much as a Dutch realist might regard the works of the disciples of Picasso; but he had had Bailarinito trained in the modern style, and it was only now and then that heredity accounted for a suertee that was pure El Balarin. On such occasions Don José's heart came near to bursting, not on Pepe's account, but because in the art of his son his own memory was kept green.

So, with his heart ticking painfully with apprehension, Don José waited until he was in the privacy of his own room before turning to that fatal middle page upon which the most important news is concentrated. It was worse than his worst dreams had led him to imagine.

'Bailarinito gave an infamous display on Sunday at Cabra. The public is beginning to tire of this young matador, who combines so little art with an insolent over-valuation of his own merit in the ring. The single hold which he has kept upon the respect of the patrons has been that of his indubitable valour; on Sunday even this appeared to desert him. Ordinarily, Bailarinito *torears* with the muleta in a style which recalls to the old members of the public the art of his distinguished father, the valiant and emotional Bailarín. On this occasion his muleta-work was contemptible. He chopped the bull in the face and from horn to horn until loud protests broke out from the audience. After two punctures carried out with the minimum of skill and an extraordinary cowardice, an indecent sabre-cut put an end to the patience of the spectators: the bronca became deafening. . . .'

The paper slipped from Don José's hand. Allowing for the obvious malice which prompted the attack, and for the violence which always characterizes bull-fight journalism, it could not be doubted that Pepe had disgraced himself and his name. A thousand excuses poured into Don José's mind to palliate the occasion: the boy was sick; he had had some kind of upset before going into the ring; his mind was disturbed by his matrimonial difficulties; the ill-conduct of his head banderillero had put him off his stroke. . . . Well, thank God, it had not happened in Sevilla or Madrid.

He picked up the paper again, and read the notice—this time aloud, bitterly accentuating the words of destruction, driving their import into himself as though each were the point of a sword. His face was suffused with blood, his wrists shook, there was a sickening emptiness in the pit of his stomach. The whole structure of his life—whose foundations were pride, pride, and again pride—seemed to tremble. Presently he rolled the thin, cheap paper into a ball and flung it from him into a corner of the room; clasping his hands behind him, he walked up and down the marble flooring, his head sunk on his chest, his eyes staring sightlessly at the ground he covered.

The heat was stifling; all Granada was given to the siesta: all Granada was lying on its beds, lazily reading *El Clarín* before falling asleep—reading about Balarinito, a subject, if there was ever one, to murder sleep! Don José flung himself with a groan on his own bed; his hands clawed at his collar, loosened it, flung it aside. He buried his face in the pillow; his hand, out-flung, clenched itself upon the bedpost; the flesh enjoyed a momentary coolness, before the sweat of his palm turned the iron to clamminess. A deadly nausea seized him, suddenly gained the mastery of him; he dragged himself to the edge of the bed and was violently, blindly sick, then fell back, groaning, among the pillows. His limbs would not be still; they jerked independently of his efforts to control them. He had a kind of feverish dream, of sand and arena, and a bull that would not ‘*embiste*’, and woke from it with a snort to look at his watch. Barely three. He had not been lying there an hour.

His body felt raw, as though each one of his old wounds had broken out again to add to his torment. Groaning again, he passed his hands over his abdomen, and suddenly saw before him the rose-white breasts of Pilár. *Madre de Dios!* He flung a hand over his eyes. He made a futile effort to concentrate his mind upon some holy object: upon one of the saintly images in the cathedral. It was a coincidence that his imagination happened to alight upon Pilár’s favourite Virgen de la Antigua, under her rococo canopy of beaten gold, with the robe of blue enamel falling on either side of her long, Botticellian limbs. Oh, Holy Virgin! Oh, Mother of Jesus, comfort me! Take this humiliation away from me! He fancied himself kneeling, looking upwards at the pale waxen face so high under the canopy that it was almost in shadow—and, to his horror, the folds of the robe parted, and revealed again the breasts of Pilár.

In something approaching a panic he flung himself off the bed. As he stood upon the cold marble, his mind strove to steady itself; blasphemous delusion was succeeded by a saner, though no less painful, state of mind. He began, under his breath, to use an abomination of oaths that he had not employed since his

days in the bull-ring. Pepe's name was mingled with the oaths. The sweat poured down his body, soaked through the thin silken vest, settled sodden in his armpits; he could smell his own sweat; it filled him with a disgust and horror of his own body. Sweat and sickness, both offences to propriety, revolted him. The smell of the room was intolerable. Crazy with disgust, he flung open with a clatter the low, heavy door, slatted into many panels of unsymmetrical size and shape, which enclosed in the thickness of the wall a kind of secret chamber or alcove. Inside this cupboard were several heavy trunks, similar to the one on the landing, iron-strapped, their weight added to by the padlocks, of which Don José possessed the keys. He pulled the latter from his pocket and, kneeling stiffly on one knee, unlocked the trunk nearest to him.

As the lid creaked back, a heavy, indescribable scent rose from the interior: a musty scent, a scent of many elements, a *living* scent, as though the lead casing entombed some only half moribund creature whose breath, half sweet, half foetid, corrupted the stuffs that covered it. A piece of material, of that unmatched cineraria-purple one comes across sometimes in ecclesiastical brocades, covered the top of the trunk's contents; Don José lifted this away with a wary hand, as one uncovers the face of the dead; a gust of camphor and herbs blew out at him; the dull glitter of tarnished metal caught his eye.

Out they came, one after another; his fighting-suits, heavy like dead bodies, dragging to the ground their weight of bullion, their knots of tassels, their preposterous embroideries of gold and silver thread. The metal was clammy to the touch, here and there the rotting silk, rotted with the exudations of his body under many broiling suns, broke away from its embroideries.

There was the silver suit he had worn last of all; or, rather, the jacket of it. The breeches were useless, save to be thrown away, after the bull had done with him. And there was the cherry-coloured silk, veiled with black lace, that he wore for Joaquin's benefit and never put on again, for there was something wrong with the padding, and he lacked the patience to have the

tailor put it right. And the jade with bronze appliqué which he always said was his unlucky suit, because, on the three or four occasions he wore it, he invariably got the cornada, and the stains would not come out of the silk. There they were still, like empurpled bruises on the bloomy surface of the material. The trimming, too, was ripped from the right sleeve. He heard again the laughter of the spectators, as the bull went dashing round the arena with a yard of galoon fluttering from its horn. And the magenta . . . the magenta which he had worn at Ronda.

Under the suits the capes were folded flat; under the capes the muleta-sticks, the muletas themselves, the sword-cases of Corbodan leather. El Bailarín lifted out a sword-case, grunting as he did so; took out a sword and made the light flicker blue down the matchless steel. The sword, as he held it, became a part of himself; his rage and pain slid down into the deadly tip. With a beast's growl, he turned upon the piles of silk and satin to slash them to pieces, but the old mercenary motive returned to prevent the worthless sacrifice of goods representing money. They were all that was left of his glory, for Pepe had deprived him of the rest. He had a savage satisfaction in knowing that it had not been possible for Pepe to wear his suits, they being too short and too small for him.

His wrist fell, the sword tip tinkled on the marble, and tears blinded his eyes: tears of a monstrous self-pity and sadness, that coursed down his cheek and fell upon the satin which had known blood, but never tears. His tears fell upon the stains of his own blood, they ran out of him like blood, weakening his whole body. He clutched the coat to his face, scratching his face against the bullion so that the blood bubbled along tiny lines of excoriation; he suffered shamelessly, like a wounded beast.

The sun was still high; the heat still frizzled in the patios. He took a furtive glance down into emptiness, from his window. Now, while people were still resting, he might go out, defy the heat, regain control of himself by walking. He changed his crumpled shirt for a fresh one, knotted his tie again under the

collar, performing mechanically all the actions which were necessary to resume his usual discreet, formal appearance. His face had regained its calmness, although blotched and sallow with his emotions; his black felt hat went on at its respectably rakish angle, he picked up his walking-stick.

Without much sense of direction, he crossed the Puerta Real and followed Mesones, a gully of shade at this hour of the day. A few drowsy shop-assistants were opening up their establishments after the midday closing time; no one he knew personally was abroad, but he walked with his accustomed strut, his shoulders thrown back, his left hand lightly clasped in the small of his back, his head tilted. He was totally unconscious of these concessions to the public gaze, for his mental state was that of a man who has just received a violent blow on the head. It was only when he had turned upward, towards the cathedral, that he became overwhelmingly conscious of the heat; found that he was struggling for breath, and that, instead of keeping prudently to the shade, he was crossing the middle of the square, where the shopkeepers pile the paving-stones with their pale, untempered crocks, their blue and green earthenware, where the asses swelter in the weight of their laden panniers, and the little birds swoon in their cages at the pavement's edge. He suddenly felt very ill, as though at any moment he might fall in the cruel sunshine, and clung to the cathedral railings, as he reached them, with a hand thrust inside his coat, over his heart. The priest who was standing cloaked, under the violet shadow of the porch, suddenly looked up from his reading, and saw Don José, whom he knew by sight. He hastened down to the locked gates.

'You are ill? You would like to rest?'

Don José was not conscious of framing a reply, as he stumbled, partly supported by the priest's arm, into the shade, which was like dropping into a deep well. The soaring spaces of the cathedral, its chill like the chill of a still pool, revived his consciousness.

'Thank you, father; it was the heat—the heat,' he muttered with some return of his grand manner. He did not wish for the

priest's company; he bowed, murmured a suitable acknowledgment of indebtedness, and, to avoid further conversation, took himself round the back of the high altar, intending to leave by another door, if he could find one open; but the weakness of his limbs forced him to sink down upon a chair. Although he no longer felt faint, his mind was in confusion. His eyes, rolling between their reddened lids, sought for some object upon which he could fix his attention: now one was in the cathedral one might as well say a prayer or two. An odd Hail, Mary here or there was supposed to do good. He tried; found he could not remember the words; became frightened; looked wildly round him for a priest. But the priest had disappeared; only a sacristan or two remained, carrying chairs, rolling the enormous candlesticks by their bases into some position required by a coming ceremony; they did it with the same matter-of-factness as a porter on a railway station rolls milk-cans. The cathedral became to Don José a large, empty building of no particular purpose; certainly not tenanted by anyone who had the slightest interest in his affairs. Delicate and silvery, the columns rose with an impersonal beauty towards the roof, like the bleached stems of forest trees.

A slow compulsion was growing in him; he could not tell towards whom or what. He obeyed it dumbly as it propelled him out into the streets again.

It was only when he found himself upon the threshold of the Carmen de los Arrayanes that he recognized the motive which had brought him here. It was Pilár that he needed; one half of his mind accepted this without argument; the other, weaker, half questioned his own sanity in coming. From Pilár he could in some way come into possession once more of his self-respect. There was nothing impure in his thoughts of her; he violated no part of his duty, either to Pepe or to the girl who was to become his daughter-in-law, by coming. The simple and primitive instinct which draws a peasant to a wayside shrine drew him towards this girl, with her saintliness and dignity.

He walked down the narrow, dusty path that led round the corner of the house to the lower entrance, found the door open,



and passed without announcement into the tiled coolness of the lower hall itself, at the opposite end of which another open door led to the terrace. The conventions had passed away from him along with his accustomed tears. He only knew, with certainty, that he had come where he could find a peace and calm which was lacking in every other place.

How did he know Pilár would be on the terrace? He did not know; he took a chance. He stood in the open doorway, puffing the cigar which he had mechanically lighted during his walk up the hill, narrowing his eyes against the glare of the sun. And her 'God be with you, Señor Don José' met him like an assurance of all that he had come to find.

Don José had no acquaintance with the self that propelled him along the terrace to Pilár's side. He surrendered to it, with surprise, without curiosity, but with a growing awe.

After Pepe's betrayal of his dearest hopes the defection of Miguel was something to shrug one's shoulders upon. He received Miguel's letter and the one written by the priest in charge of the seminary at the same time. He discussed the matter calmly with Don Antonio. Don Antonio found his calmness extremely offensive; his own face was crimson, it was plain that he held back much behind the thin line of his closed lips. There was malice in Don José's calmness; he did not forget that, when he had been agitated, Don Antonio was as cool as a fish—over the matter of Pepe's postponed marriage.

'It is plain,' said Don José, without much sincerity, 'that I am to atone in my sons for the sins of my past. One might do worse than have one's purgatory here on earth.' He did not really feel that the matter had much to do with him. In putting Miguel to the Sacro Monte he had felt he discharged his obligations in that direction; one could not carry the load of one's indiscretions for ever, like an Old Man of the Sea. He was prepared to be terse with Don Antonio on the subject.

'You understand?' thrust Don Antonio viciously. 'If all that these letters say is true, it will be a matter of excommunication.'

'One bows to the will of the Church, father,' said Don José, spreading out his hands with so exaggerated and ironical a gesture that Don Antonio, biting his lips, itched to remind him of the days when his submission had not been complete.

'The forgiveness of God is not to be earned easily, my son,' snapped Don Antonio.

'Yes, yes,' said Don José blankly. '*Madre de Dios!*' he burst out. 'Has not Granada enough to gossip about already?'

'You are making a great mistake in setting your own pride against your son's betrayal of the Church!'

The Church—the Church! What was the Church to him? The Church was a political institution, deriving its authority from the superstition of an unlettered people. Don José remembered how, in his most need, he had gone into the cathedral and found there stones and mortar and marble—fine elements of comfort for a broken-hearted man! One obeyed the Church with the tongue in one's cheek, after reaching years of discretion. Secretly he admired Miguel for his public disclaimer of its jealous influence; it was the first time in his life that he had ever tasted the sweets of admiration for his second son, and, alas, this admiration had to be smothered up. It was not a thing one could boast about. When the news leaked out that he had a son who had run away from the Sacro Monte his prestige was not likely to be enhanced among his friends of the Ayuntamiento, of the Comandancia Militar, of the Disputación Provincial.

The will of God was against him. No one should see that he was aware of it. The name of Bailarinito had only passed between him and Don Antonio in a perfunctory fashion; after all, Don Antonio was a Granadino, and Granada was tactful about Bailarinito; from the alcalde down to Tomás the wine-shop boy none were anxious to discuss his disgrace. The honour of the town had suffered at the hands of Bailarinito, and its citizens were more anxious to forget the matter than to talk about it. Bailarinito himself was doing his best to help them to forget, for, fulfilling his promise to his father, he had made quite a respectable show at Malaga, and the worst the aficionados had

to say of him at the moment was that he was unreliable. His courage, having failed once, might fail again. The patrons of the bull-ring do not care for a matador whose courage is uncertain. The Press continued malicious, but would sing a different song when its throat was lubricated with the help of Pilár's money.

Don José had recovered his poise over the affairs of Pepe, and might have regained his peace of mind, for he was only too ready to allow himself to be persuaded that all was well in that quarter, had it not been for a poisonous little conversation overheard in the Café Alameda, where Don José, reading his newspaper, waited for some of his friends.

He was aware of bull-fighters at the next table; they were nondescripts, nonentities of their profession, not to be honoured by his attention; not being Granadinos, it was possible they did not even know him by sight; but their clipped conversation burned in his ears as he read, or appeared to read, about revolutionary rioting in Madrid.

'Bailarinito's pulled up again.'

'Yes, he's pulled up again. Till the next time.'

'They say he's got a new woman.'

'He's always got a new woman.'

'Bailarinito's *loco*. Fancy going in for women, with a million pesetas waiting for him here in Granada.'

'Bailarinito's *muy hombre*. He can't get along without women.'

'He'll be taking his women into the ring with him next!'

'Yes, to pull him off when the bull's got its horns in his backside!'

The conversation leaped from peak to peak of the indecent; under cover of a burst of laughter over some inaudible sally, Don José rose, and, keeping his back carefully to the bull-fighters, made his way out of the café.

What right had he to judge Bailarinito, he wondered as he stepped sombrely homeward. Had he not been '*muy hombre*' also? Yet he had not allowed it to come between himself and his profession. Never, never. Work, and then women. With Pepe it was women, and then work. No use shutting the eyes to where that led.

‘It is bad that Miguel should desert the priesthood,’ he said, scowling at Don Antonio. ‘It is also bad that he should become a revolutionary.’ His tone betrayed the fact that the latter was, in his opinion, the worse of the two evils.

‘The one goes with the other,’ shrugged Don Antonio. ‘There is no obligation for anyone to become a priest if he does not want to; the abomination is this, in Don Umberto’s letter—that Miguel has been actively propagating heresy among his fellow seminarists, and inciting them to forsake the Church as he himself has done.’

Don José lifted his right hand and let it fall clenched, a hopeless gesture.

‘Before the Republic there was none of this. The Republic is the end of Spain,’ he said simply.

‘The end of Spain is the downfall of the Church,’ retorted Don Antonio. ‘It is possible that even the Republic might have had the blessing of God, had it kept its hands off the Church.’

‘*Never!*’ thundered Don José, driving the word into the priest’s face as one might drive a clenched fist; for he had long cherished a secret grudge against Don Antonio—the kind of grudge a man bears against another who knows all the worst as well as some of the best of him. His conventional attitude to Don Antonio as his spiritual director was a thin glaze over the more secular and manlike elements of their relationship. Over the copla, over a good meal, or on a matter of civic politics, Don Antonio was an agreeable companion; but this Church, Church, Church which latterly he had been dinning in Don José’s ears had ended by offending them. His present attitude was designed to remind Don Antonio that he was no longer El Bailarín, the irresponsible and profligate bull-fighter, to be kept in order, as far as possible, by his director; but the admired and respected Don José Díaz Marquez, who maintained, like the majority of his class, the tradition of the monarchy.

He scorned the Republic with a bitterness that expressed itself in ironical deference to the distinguished republicans that public affairs brought to Granada; when Zamorra paid a visit to the

university and all Granada crowded to see him, Don José sat ostentatiously outside the café, drinking his beer and commenting on the emptiness of the streets.

The fall of the monarchy had shaken the foundations of his own greatness, and he passionately resented the government that succeeded it. He had had, in common with many other informed Spaniards, little respect for Alfonso as Alfonso, and he did not overlook the fact that, owing to the Queen's objection to it, the bull-fight occupied a position of jeopardy for the first time in Spanish history; but the thing that this unsatisfactory couple stood for was something that belonged by divine right to every Spaniard: an ancient grandeur whose rays descended upon every class of subject and were not confined to the throne. It was for the loss of this, as well as for more practical and immediate matters, that Don José cursed the Republic.

The association of Miguel with this traitorous administration he regarded as a personal affront beyond the reach of his forgiveness. He had little or no understanding of Miguel's revolutionary aims. Let the Church cast him out, and the door of his home stood open to him. But let him turn renegade of his own free will, let him associate himself with those who were opposed to every tradition that his father respected, and he should never again cross the threshold.

Such was Don José's attitude, dictated in part by theatricalism, and easily translated into terms of indignation for the benefit of Don Antonio. He came, very magnificently, through an interview with the bishop; applied, unsuccessfully, for the return of the remainder of Miguel's seminary fees, paid in advance up to the end of the year; and resigned himself outwardly to acceptance of the situation.

But his inward discomfort caused him to order the return of Juan from Sanpedro.

## Eleven

JUAN HAD returned from Sanpedro much matured in mind as well as in body. He was conscious of this fact, and linked it mentally with his conversation with Miguel. The fact of Miguel's conversing with him as with an adult had had a momentous effect upon his whole mentality, then at so sensitive a stage of development. He strolled into Trini's to make his return known to Tomás, and found the latter in a state of effervescence which he was slightly annoyed by being unable to attribute to his own return.

'*Hombre!* I'm glad to see you back! You've come at the right moment—I should just say you have!' burred Tomás, clapping his hands down on Juan's shoulders and twinkling his little screwed-up eyes with delight.

'*Qué tal?*' What's been happening in Granada while I've been away?' asked Juan, with assumed nonchalance. He wished Tomás to notice—without mentioning it—that he had grown at least a couple of inches; that he was no longer wearing shorts; that he had a new poise, a new confidence of bearing, which he now chose to emphasize by spinning a peseta-piece across the marble table. 'I'll have a glass of beer,' he announced magnificently; out of the corner of his eye he had marked Trini's god-daughter, Carmen, from the house across the way; one did not have dealings with Carmen, but there was no harm in impressing her with one's manliness.

'Sure! That's grand!' said Tomás, drawing the beer and placing it at Juan's elbow with such beaming goodwill that the

latter was ashamed of his arrogance. 'Have a glass of beer with me, Tomás,' he muttered. The two boys smiled at each other shyly across the tumbler edges. '*Salud!*' murmured Juan, imitating Tomás's proficiency, to the best of his ability, in emptying the contents down his throat at a gulp.

'Well, what's the matter? Why are you so excited?'

'*Hombre!* What do you think? I'm to have the day off tomorrow. The whole day, not a part of it. My mother is getting married again—think of that now! Well, of course, I'm going to the wedding. How's my mother to get married, I should like to know, unless her first-born's there to see that everything's properly done?'

'I congratulate you, Tomás, upon acquiring a new father,' said Juan seriously.

'I don't know so much about that,' admitted Tomás. 'I don't know that Papa Jorge will be so much to shake hands about. But men are scarce in our village, and I dare say my mother is well enough satisfied, though it will mean washing for seven instead of six.'

'Have you six brothers and sisters?'

'Six at home; and then there's me, and Inigo, who is a sailor, and Jaime, who has disappeared, and Gallita, who married a gipsy,' said Tomás cheerfully; 'they'll all be at the wedding except Jaime—and I wouldn't be surprised if he turns up; he might think there was something to be picked up from a new stepfather. He doesn't know Papa Jorge!'

'Well, that's very nice for you,' said Juan.

'Yes, but listen here; that's not the whole of it. When I heard you were coming back to-day I had a great idea,' continued Tomás. 'How'd you like to come to the wedding and see the fun? I can tell you, we're a lively crowd in our village! It will be a grand do; there won't be room to turn round.' Tomás paused to draw breath. 'But that's not the best part of it! Can you beat this? In the afternoon there's going to be a bull-fight—a capea—in the square. The place will go out of its mind—a wedding and a bull-fight, both on the same day!'

There was a silence, broken only by the shuffle of Tomás's excited feet on the floor and the trickle of the fountain.

'All right . . . I'll come,' said Juan slowly. Tomás seized his hands and wrung them.

'That's fine! Now, listen: we're setting off soon after it's daylight, so as to get there before the heat starts——'

Juan listened, nodding, to Tomás's arrangements.

His jaw hardened as he listened; a polite, stiff smile sculptured itself on his features. Yes, he would come; yes, he would be ready at daybreak; yes, the wedding would be great fun, and the bull-fight would be a grand climax to it.

It was truly a youth in search of his valour who returned from Sanpedro. He had come back fully determined to force himself into every possible contingency which could test his courage; to shirk no part of the ritual which effects the transformation between adolescence and manhood. He wished to achieve this as much on Don José's account as on his own. His 'accident' now filled him with a bitter shame; it was to be atoned for by some fierce, desperate, and wholly distasteful act before he could regard himself as the man he wanted to be.

His conversation with Miguel had left his mind in a state of great confusion, and he wisely resolved to give as little thought as possible to it. He would continue to go to mass and confession, although these could not mean as much to him as they had formerly done. Juan's mind was naturally disposed towards religion, and during the worst onslaughts of his cowardice he had certainly gained, or believed that he gained, some kind of support from that personal God whom Miguel so strenuously denied. He was not instantly prepared, even for Miguel, to relinquish the slim consolation of his prayers.

Yet Miguel had persuaded him that there was something childish and ignominious in this faith; something that held him back, rather than assisted him to that maturity for which he craved. It did not bear thinking about; the only point on which Juan was clear was that he must walk before he could run, that he must discover in himself some elements of strength before



he trusted himself to that impersonal Power of which his brother spoke.

It was a world of whispers into which the boys stepped out on the following morning; the streets were but faintly washed with the silver of dawn; like clusters of lilac flowers, the shadows still clung to the ancient walls; delicate and lovely beyond description appeared the town of Granada, slowly withdrawing itself from darkness. The dust rose to their ankles like milk; at every moment the vibrating atmosphere changed the colour of a tree, a turret, a façade; in an upper window of the house of La Tortejada, the old ballet-dancer, a light still shone, pale as a crocus in the encroaching dawn; frail as a dream appeared the outlines of the houses at one moment; at the next their roofs sharpened against a sky already turning to rose from lavender.

As they passed down the Calle de las Moras, a late client slipped like a cat from the doorstep of one of the houses; the girls of La Montillana, with their friends, stood in a clump outside their closed shutters, exchanging inaudible farewells; about them, as the boys passed close to them, hung a smell of wine, of tobacco smoke, of stale perfume; their eyes glazed with fatigue, their faces at once hard and sodden in the innocent light, the vermilion smeared at the corners of their mouths, the mascara running from their lashes. Discarded puppets of pleasure, they hung upon the pavement like things that must dissolve in sunrise.

Tomás was inhumanly, unnaturally tidy in his best suit, in a violent pink shirt and blue socks with round white spots on them, which were liberally displayed by his turned-up trousers; he carried under one arm a rolled-up bundle, and upon the other a basket covered with a white cloth. This contained Trini's complimentary gift to his mother—a couple of rabbits and a bag of shrimps. Juan had himself frowned over the question of providing himself with a wedding gift, but the fact that they were to walk most of the way had disposed of any scruples of generosity he felt on the occasion. One could not carry parcels like a shop assistant. On the other hand, it was very difficult to arrive at a wedding empty-handed. But at that hour of the morning the

chances were against their finding a conveyance of any sort going up into the mountains, and it was much better to be empty-handed.

They padded almost noiselessly through the silent streets; both boys were wearing alpargatas, the rope-soled shoes which are the only reasonable wear for long-distance walking; Tomás had his best boots slung across one shoulder by their laces, and Juan had not troubled about his. The pockets of his coat were bulged out by the provision he had made for their journey: bread and cheese and ham, olives and a bottle of light wine. He would have liked to suggest putting these into the basket, but that would have meant that he would have to offer to share its weight with Tomás, and the idea did not appeal to him. Each was puffing a cigarette; they hardly spoke until they had left the town behind and were set towards the hills beyond which they had to travel.

The snows of the sierra were already turning to blood; the eastern horizon bloomed into a savage rose, and suddenly each fold and seam in the landscape before them echoed the colour of the sky.

'Phew! It's a good thing we started so soon,' said Tomás. 'In an hour or two there'll be a stinking heat.' He shifted his two burdens from one arm to the other. Juan had an uncomfortable feeling he should offer to relieve Tomás of one of them, but pride conquered the more kindly impulse, and he merely asked:

'What have you got there in the bundle?'

'Why, *hombre*! My old clothes, of course! You don't think I'm going into the capea in my best trousers, do you?'

'Are you going to fight the bull?' said Juan, aghast.

'*Qué si!*' answered Tomás, with such unfeigned amazement it was plain no other idea had entered his head. 'I should just think I am! I'd like to see any of the boys in our village who won't have a go at old Satanás. That's our bull. *Hombre*, let me tell you we've got a fine bull in our village! That bull's been fighting for six years now, and there's not much he doesn't know!

*Bravo toro!*—but I'm not going to make him a present of my best trousers, all the same.'

'I should think that bull's tough, if he's been fighting for six years,' conceded Juan, with careful nonchalance.

'*Hombre!* Is he tough! And I'll tell you something else. It's no joke if he catches you with his horns. Last summer he scratched a man—I give you my word it wasn't any more than a scratch. And what happened? In less than an hour he was green, blue, and purple like a rainbow! Poisoned, see? *Hombre*, you should have seen how he blew up like a bladder, and all the women screaming round him, and the priest and the doctor not able to do a thing between them: and so he died.'

'Died from a scratch?' sneered Juan; but he was not entirely able to conceal the fact that he was impressed by Tomás's highly coloured version of the scene. Neither boy knew enough to realize that the man had already probably got blood-poisoning, and that his scratch was not even a contributory cause of his death.

'Sure,' said Tomás. 'And he wasn't the first. Eleven men that bull's killed, and when he's got his dozen they'll let him off,' he added, with satisfaction. 'It's a good killing day to-day,' he remarked, with the air of a connoisseur, sniffing the scent of the parched earth, now giving off its surface dew in the increasing power of the sun. 'You ought to have a go at old Satanás yourself! That would please the alcalde, I can tell you—the son of El Bailarín having a go at our old bull!' His eyes twinkled his honest belief in Juan's ability.

'That rough-and-tumble stuff doesn't appeal to me,' said the latter magnificently.

'But, *hombre!* The capea is the breeding-ground of matadors,' protested Tomás. 'A man doesn't know what bull-fighting is unless he's gone through the capeas. Why, there was a chap last year—he was only thirteen years old, and he'd walked all the way from Quentar to have a go at our old bull. He'll make a fine matador one day. I say, he'll make a fine matador.'

'Anyhow, they're illegal,' pointed out Juan unpleasantly. Tomás flung back his head and laughed aloud.

'Every year they say they're illegal and then they start over again. The alcalde of our village used to be a fine sporting chap—a real aficionado—and so's the priest; I've seen both of them helping to build the barricades round the square for the bull-fight to take place. The Guardia Civil can't do much against that sort of thing, can they?'

'Well, who fights?' asked Juan, in a bored tone.

'Who fights? *Madre de Dios!*' gasped Tomás, echoing his idol. 'Why, everybody! That is, they would if the alcalde let them. I tell you there isn't a man in our village, unless he's too old to stand up on his feet, who wouldn't go in and take his chance. And not only the men, either! There's a girl—Ana they call her; she's the daughter of La Gallina, the water-seller. You should just see her. That *gachi!* I've seen her hang on the bull's horns and spit in his face.'

The heat was beginning to be overpowering when the boys stopped to eat their breakfast; the ground on which they seated themselves burned through their garments. The long, slow slopes of the lion-coloured hills had changed for more ferocious scenery; the savage summits of the mountains tore at a sky already hard as enamel, their ridged escarpments stood like symbols of destruction over the sunless gorges; a deep, emotional excitement began to take possession of Juan. He threw back his head and started to sing; his song went tumbling down the mountainside, as though each note changed itself into a small ringing shell or pebble. He no longer had need to be mistrustful of his voice; during his stay at Sanpedro it had declared itself finally for what it meant to be—a clear, strong tenor, with the nasal intonation of the country. '*Olé!*' observed Tomás, with his mouth full.

Above them was a tiny fonda, a little cultivated land; but the upper part of the hillside on which they were lying was a grazing-ground for a flock of rust-coloured goats, who lifted their heads and mad, topaz-coloured eyes to see where the sound came from. The goatherd himself lay sleeping, his hat tilted over his face, his pipe fallen from a slack, sweaty hand.

'What a life!' commented Tomás, jerking his head in the

direction of the sleeping boy. '*Hombre!* It would send me *loco*. Nothing to do, nothing to see——'

'Nothing to see? Do you see how that bit of mountain cuts a three-cornered pattern on the one next to it? In an hour that will be gone; the sun will be so high it will get right down into the valleys,' said Juan dreamily. 'And all those ridges that repeat the same rhythm—like a word of five syllables—An-da-lu-cí-a, An-da-lu-cí-a . . .'

'You're *loco*,' said Tomás calmly. 'A mountain's a mountain and a shadow's a shadow, but there's not much company to be had out of either of them.'

'The country here isn't as pretty as Sanpedro, but it's grander, much grander. It's plain, where the other is decorated; it's stark—like a childless woman——'

'Talking of women,' said Tomás readily, 'it's a pity I didn't think of fetching Lucia with me. I nearly always take a girl when I go into the country. There's something about the country makes me want a girl. Didn't you find it that way at Sanpedro?'

'No,' frowned Juan. He wished he had.

'Do you mean to say you haven't——? Not yet——?'

'There's plenty of time for that,' said Juan, assuming a confidence he did not feel. Tomás appeared gravely shocked.

'That's all very well, *hombre*. But it won't be any easier for putting it off so long. You've got to make a man of yourself one day.'

'See here,' broke in Juan desperately. 'What am I to do? I've not brought a wedding present with me.'

As in courtesy bound, Tomás protested that such a thing was not to be thought of: that his mother would be out-faced if Juan were to present her with a gift: that his presence so honoured the occasion as to make any offering a superfluity—and then, being intrinsically sincere, he knitted his brows and began to think how Juan could remedy this serious omission.

'I'll tell you what it is; you can take her a bunch of grapes. You will see—there is a place we will pass, just as we are going

into the village, where they have a vine. I expect the people will be all up in the market-place, but we shan't be doing them any harm if we help ourselves to a bunch. That will put you quite on the right side,' he assured Juan.

'All right; and if we don't get on, the sun will knock us down before we get there,' said Juan, pulling his shirt open at the neck. Both boys were streaming with perspiration, and Tomás's pink shirt was almost crimson in front with the dampness of his body.

It was true, the heat was already dizzying across the unprotected hills; an indistinct sea of tawny waves, faintly heaving, seemed to surround them both as they struggled on. They had with one accord forsaken the hard and dusty main road, for the only attraction it offered—the possibility of their obtaining a lift for some part of the way—was so remote as to be counter-balanced by the superior comfort of treading earth. Tomás declared he knew the way through the hills, and, although it added considerably to their journey, and was terribly exhausting, with its ups and downs, both boys voted for it in preference to the long and looping road that overhung the ravine on their right. The sun was full in their faces; both took their coats off, and Tomás dragged his socks off as well.

They came at last to a kind of *cul de sac* of the mountains: a dead end, where the cliff-like façades of grey and garnet rock reared themselves above the saffron roofs of one of those tiny hill-villages that exist upon the fringes of civilization to mark the community spirit of mankind.

Juan had possessed himself, by means he was too fatigued to question, of a bunch of sour-looking green grapes—the best, Tomás assured him, that were to be had. Long before they trod the uneven ramblas it became apparent the place was in a ferment. The boys had been walking for the best part of six hours; they reeled a little as they came into the village, where the whitewashed walls of the houses leaned together, it would seem with an instinct of mutual support; where the stench of inadequate sanitation rose simmering from the gutters; where the

rejas were blistered with many suns, and bleached to a frail jade colour; where long strings of scarlet and green pimentos hung from the balconies; where poverty was in the air, as it is in the air of all these little Spanish villages, and ordinarily the life of the community seems drowned in an inescapable languor. Juan had a poetic love of these little hill towns, which look what they probably are—one-time strongholds of brigands; and, despite his fatigue, looked about him with eyes of the brightest interest at the small windowless hovels, scooped out of the solid rock, that sheltered the poorest of that poverty-stricken population.

A well stood at the end of the street, and beside it in the sun sat, evidently, the town's ancient, wearing a battered Cordoban hat over the black scarf that bandaged his probably hairless head. His face was seamed with smallpox, and was the colour of ash; one eye was crushed into a pulp, the other stared from a rheumy socket with impersonal malice at the two boys. To Juan he stood for the spirit of the place itself: its cut-throat gullies; the sinister suggestiveness of its upper windows; the half-naked, wholly savage children dodging in and out of doorways with their hands full of dung seemed to derive from this sombre figure; he might have fathered them all.

Tomás, however, hailed him with a cheerfulness that disclaimed any such tenebrous notions.

'*Olé*, Tío Chomba! What's everybody doing?'

The ancient mumbled something that was incomprehensible to Juan, but caused Tomás to give a shout of delight.

'Come and let's get rid of these first,' he said to Juan, as, taking him by the elbow, he hurried him into a passage hardly wide enough to admit the shoulders of a full-grown man. 'I tell you there's some good fun on! The new alcalde made a fuss about the capea, and they've taken him and locked him up in the courthouse till it's over! That's what we're like in our village,' ended Tomás proudly, shoving Juan before him. 'There's the square at the end, and our house is just off it, in an entry like this one.'

Never, thought Juan, had he seen a population like that which

crowded the square on this simmering morning: everywhere bodies thrust themselves at his; everywhere he turned there were thin, savage faces—faces of gipsies, hawk-like, predatory, burning with the same inexplicable fever; a fever of riot or revolution, it might have appeared to a stranger, but Juan knew well that there was no revolutionary ardour in these ignorant people; every kind of undesirable, of outlaw, seemed to be congregated between the close-set walls for the occasion. Some, with a crimson roll under their arms, were recognizable as itinerant bull-fighters; their clothes were ragged, their feet bare, or thonged into rough strips of leather. Upon the faces of all the men was the same vicious imprint which would have warned Juan, had he not been accompanied by the unmoved Tomás, to keep clear of the town. Countrymen on horseback dominated the gathering; they wore coats of faded cotton or corduroy, and the animals they rode were thin and bony hacks, caricatures of horses that reminded Juan of the victims of the bull-ring. Over all there was a deafening hubbub of market vendors yelling from their stalls of bread and poisonous pink sweetmeats, of gimcrack toys for children and doubtful fruit. Tomás had to put his mouth close to Juan's ear to make himself heard.

'What did I tell you? We're lively in our village when we've got something to be lively about!'

They were jostled across the square, thrust into another rambla a little wider than the first. It was crowded with women, and it was easy to see that here was the house of the bride. From windows and balconies hung a brave display of shawls, bedspreads, and carpets, that transformed the darkling alley into a bazaar; the women on the doorsteps, thin, fierce-looking creatures, wore likewise their best shawls over drab modern dresses; one or two had combs or carnations thrust in their hair; there was a reek of female bodies and cheap perfume, an endless high chatter of raucous soprano voices, the unskilled twanging of guitars.

'Here we are!' gasped Tomás, pushing Juan ahead of him through a low doorway, about which the densest of the crowd



was gathered. Dazzled with sunlight, Juan could for a moment make out nothing in the darkness of the room, which, like the street outside, was packed with women. He thought he had never before known such a smell of women! Women of every age, they packed the little room from wall to wall, and flowed out beyond it to some sort of yard or patio that lay behind.

'*Arré!*' bawled Tomás, dropping his basket. All heads turned towards him; he and Juan were thrust into a narrow passage that parted in the throng, and found themselves face to face with the bride-to-be. 'I've brought you a distinguished guest, mother, to honour your wedding! Here is the Señor Don Juan Díaz, the son of El Bailarín!'

Juan, stunned by the clamour, was bowing, presenting his grapes to the fattest woman he ever remembered seeing. She reminded him of a fat white idol, hung with every sort of gew-gaw; the end of her mantilla lay flat upon the enormous shelf of her bosom, the smile of coquetry with which she received Juan's offering was lost in the vast fleshy folds of a face as white as lard; her voice came like a thin trickle of water out of the spout of her tiny lips.

'She had to get married, you see,' prompted Tomás cheerfully, 'because she was too fat to go on with her work, and the children had to be kept!'

Juan blushed and laughed. He had never before been intimately received in a home of this class, and he was a little out of his depth. He felt a girl's arm slide round his neck, could feel her young breast pressing against his arm. He had never before been touched so intimately by a woman, and a wave of self-consciousness poured over him, although a quick glance had shown him that the little girl was not more than twelve or thirteen years old.

'*Qué bonito! Qué torero!*' she proclaimed, with her head on one side and her eyes of pansy darkness on his. Instantly the company accepted Juan as a bull-fighter; his welcome was assured. Still clinging to him, the girl dragged Juan to a niche in the wall, where a skin of wine was standing. He understood from her

gestures that he was invited to drink, and gratefully accepted the invitation, raising the skin triumphantly above his head, so that the wine spouted in a dark shining arc into his open mouth. He was glad to have learnt this trick from Tomás, since it brought upon him the evident approval of the company. The rough, harsh taste of the wine was more agreeable to his parched palate than a more delicate one would have been. The little girl was coquetting with him, mutely inviting him to kiss her; surreptitiously she had seized his hand and cupped it over her small breast. A flame of excitement passed through him; the wine and the atmosphere of women together gave him a thrill different from any he had previously experienced. He was about to give her some cautious caress when Tomás tugged at his sleeve. 'Ana! I told you about Ana. Here's Ana—and she says she's going to fight the bull this afternoon!'

A tall, raw-boned woman was looking down at him, with her hands planted on her hips; she had the face of a dissolute youth and a youth's flat-breasted figure, which her shawl of thin cerise silk moulded into whip-like narrowness; her hips were in continual play beneath a flounced skirt of white-spotted dark blue material.

'Why didn't you fetch your father?' Ana was saying. 'I'd like El Balarín to see me with a bull.'

In his excitement Juan waxed impudent.

'Perhaps you'd like El Balarín to banderillear for you!' he retorted. Ana tossed her head, and a loud laugh went round as she swaggered back to her companions.

'Come on,' said Tomás, 'let's go and see what they're doing with the alcalde——'

'Stay here with me,' whispered the little girl. Her warm, damp fingers twisted themselves into Juan's. 'Stay with me, and I'll show you something you'll like——'

'Later on,' he whispered. Tomás was dragging him out into the street again. He had a mad feeling of unreality and carnival. 'What time's the wedding?' he yelled in Tomás's ear.

'Oh, so soon as Don Cristóbal wakes up,' shouted Tomás. 'He was very drunk last night, and he always sleeps late the

morning after he's been drinking; but he'll wake up in time for the bull-fight, and they'll have to wait till the wedding's taken place.'

There was hubbub round the courthouse where the alcalde was imprisoned. A wholly good-tempered mob serenaded the imprisoned man with a clatter of sticks and castanets, a blind guitarrista had settled down in the gutter, and a cheerfully drunken individual snapped his fingers in the air and broke into a dance. 'Olé!' yelled Tomás, pausing to snatch a handful of peanuts out of an old woman's basket. Juan anticipated her screech of resentment by throwing a ten-centimo piece on the top of her basket; her hand went down after it like a claw. He burst out laughing as, in answer to the smothered shout that came through the window of the courthouse, Tomás tossed in three or four peanuts. This action of Tomás's was so heartily approved by the populace that nutshells, rotten vegetables, and, finally, the decomposed carcase of a cat, found their way in through the window. Ironical cheers greeted the last contribution.

'He won't starve, anyhow,' said Tomás. '*Hombre!* Eating nuts makes you thirsty. Let's go and have a drink.'

The posada they entered was as crowded as other parts of the town; suspicion glinted in many eyes as the too-well-dressed figure of Juan entered, but Tomás's hands planted on his shoulders prevented any hostile demonstration. There was a vile smell of dirt in the sordid little place, and the glasses were so crusted with old filth that Juan followed Tomás's example and drank from the neck of the bottle. The same sour, harsh wine which he had tasted from the skin now ran less agreeably over his palate; he had an inspiration.

'Can't we buy some Valdepeña and take it back with us?' he whispered to Tomás.

'*Hombre*, that's a fine idea—the idea of a gentleman,' cordially agreed Tomás, cheerfully assuming the weight of the four bottles, at fifty centimos apiece, which Juan paid for. It was, said Tomás, usual to wait for the marriage to take place before starting the feast, but, in view of the idiosyncrasy of Don Cristóbal, they

would probably start before, and finish up the remains when they returned from the church.

Tables had been spread out of doors when the two boys returned, and were heaped with every kind of food. For some reason or other, the white floury mountain which was Tomás's mother had dissolved into tears. She cried quite immovably and with no apparent inconvenience to herself; the tears furrowed the powder on her face and puddled the ends of her mantilla. Out there under a scraggy orange-tree she looked more than ever like a decorated idol; the women passed remarks of admiration and identified ornaments they had lent the bride for the occasion.

Juan did not feel like eating, but he drank more and more of the wine; he had never in his life drunk so much wine. The flies buzzed in a black cloud over the dishes and were casually beaten away by the guests. 'That's Papa Jorge,' said Tomás, pointing to a hard-bitten individual who, in a wide white hat, with a great bunch of red oleander in his coat, could hardly have been other than the bridegroom. The notion of this rakish-looking being marrying the white flour-mountain made Juan laugh, but naturally he could not reveal the cause of his laughter to Tomás. The crowd of Tomás's younger brothers and sisters descended upon them; among them was the girl who had given him wine. She had changed her gown; there were sophisticated little question-marks of stiffened hair on her brow and temples, but her small oval face and neck were tender as a spray of blossom. She had four paper carnations—two crimson, an orange, and a white one—fixed in front of her comb. She paused for a moment, pressing her thigh against Juan's.

'Later?'

He nodded, unable to speak. The sun was beating up into a sky like an arched dome of blue metal, that flung the heat down inexorably upon the earth. The wedding guests were growing a little languid; Juan was impatient of their languor. He felt a mounting vibration in his body that spurred him to action, but he did not know what he wanted to do. He was almost terrified of this cumulative energy for which there seemed no way of

finding expression. Groups of men had settled down with their backs to the wall; their heads dropped forward upon their tented knees. The women crossed their arms on the table and allowed their heads to sink upon them. He wanted to jump up and cry out to them, 'Don't sleep! Don't waste a minute of this extraordinary time! We may never—any of us—feel like this again!' He leaned against Tomás, who had gone lethargic like the rest; his own eyes were dancing, his heart thumping against his bosom. He drank more wine.

The lull in activity was broken by the entrance of a short, spare little priest, whose sotana was green with age and stained down the front with traces of many repasts. This worthy clapped his hands and brought the sleepy, wine-flushed faces up to see the meaning of the summons.

'Now then, now then! It's not time for the siesta yet! Come, come, Lupe Mateos! Don't you want a husband? You'll enjoy your siesta much better when you have someone to share it with you. Come, come, Jorge! Think how well you'll sleep after your wedding!'

Sleepy laughter greeted this sally; unwilling limbs stirred to do the priest's bidding.

'And the barricado isn't finished yet,' went on Don Cristóbal. 'None of you men can go to sleep until the barricado's finished. You don't want old Satanás plunging into your patios, I suppose? It would take more than Ana to get him out of here if he once got his shoulders through that doorway.'

Doña Lupe shivered into consciousness like a mountain wakening from immemorial slumber. Her friends rushed at her, straightening her comb, brushing the traces of her meal from her bosom, hastily pinning a fold of her dress to conceal a wine-stain. 'My flowers! My shawl!' she piped. A bunch of yellow daisies was thrust into her hand; a Manila shawl—which, on her, looked like a handkerchief—draped round her vast shoulders.

'Tomás! Tomás!' whispered Juan.

'What is it?'

'I don't know—something's happened to me—I'm not myself—I'm not——'

'You've drunk too much wine, that's all,' said the practical Tomás. 'Why don't you go behind that wall and be sick? You can easily do it by putting your fingers down your throat—look—like this.' Tomás gave a terrifying demonstration. Juan shook his head; it was not that.

The noise, inside and out of the church, was deafening; Tomás, swelling with pride, shouted in Juan's ear:

'There's not been a wedding like this in our village since I can remember!'

Don Cristóbal bellowed from the chancel steps for silence; the bride edged herself into the foreground, as though fearing that by some mischance her betrothed should get himself tied up with another person. Her eyebrows strained up at Don Cristóbal; her podgy finger pointed to her enormous bosom. 'It's me, it's me!' The bridegroom presented his hat and his cigar to a friend to hold while the ceremony proceeded. Juan felt something wriggle, like a cat, against his side; was aware of slim, hot fingers that twisted themselves into his own. . . .

After the wedding, as Juan had expected, everyone began to get drunk. The raw wine, of which there seemed to be no lack, was very potent. His dislike for it had now passed; he craved for it. His sense of belonging to a world apart from these people had completely vanished; he wanted to live their life, to do as they did. Some of the wedding guests had already collapsed, and blocked the narrow gangways between the tables; the bride and groom had promptly retired; couple after couple surrendered to the all-powerful prompting of their senses, few troubling about publicity, because each was secure in the knowledge that his companions felt as he did himself; wine and the sun reigned like twin monarchs over the company.

'You can look after yourself for a bit?' Tomás's face, crimson as sunset, with eyes that had dwindled to pin-points between the lids; Tomás's hand was clutching that of a girl who looked on the point of swooning; her eyes were half closed, her lips parted in vacuous smile.

'I'm—all—right,' Juan heard himself murmur; he had one

overwhelming desire—to allow himself to drop on the ground, like some of the others, and sleep till the heat was over.

He felt a hand tug at his coat. It was foolishly difficult to obey the summons of the hand; his knees felt weak, his ankles gave as he rose unsteadily to his feet. His eyes seemed to be closed; he felt himself stumbling over a step; it was suddenly cool. He was pushed gently backwards; his limbs gave way, and by the feel of the softness under him he knew he was on a bed. How much better this than lying out in the heat!

There was a warm softness, like that of a little animal, against his side. He made a limp movement to push it gently away; he did not want anything near him. It pressed closer; there was a whisper in his ear. Juan smiled sleepily; it was too hot to talk. Too hot to do anything—but sleep——

He rolled over on his face; his head lay on his crossed arms; somewhere he had heard a shrill chattering like an angry bird; he smiled again. He knew his eyelids would never, never again come open. The wine had its way with him. Juan slept.

## Twelve

**A**T FIVE O'CLOCK every house had emptied itself as though by magic, save those around the square, where doors, windows, balconies, and roofs were crowded with a riotous, slightly tipsy audience that awaited the arrival of the bull. Down in the square itself a tatterdemalion mob collected, of bull-fighters and would-be bull-fighters, a thin, half-starved nondescript army, desperately bent on proving its valour, driven to doing so by a multitude of varying motives. For some it was the desire to show off in front of some woman; a few were serious aspirants, but of these there were not many; the bull was not to be killed, it was a mere matter of sticking a few darts, of flourishing a bit of red rag, of dodging about in a manner devoid of real skill, for the number of performers left little opportunity for studied work; some were there to test their valour with a bull that was known to be a formidable one; others for the mere love of danger itself, or from a more debased instinct still—the pleasure of seeing blood. A savage and diabolical spirit presides over the capeas, their tragedy is not the splendid tragedy of the corrida, but of something much lower, much more degraded, bestial and ruinous to those who take part, whether actively or as spectators.

The heat of the sun was still violent; it crimsoned the faces of those looking down into the square—mainly women and children, for a man, unless he wished to mark himself as a coward, remained at the lower windows, if not in the square itself. The walls of the square seemed to consist entirely of these faces, primitive and bestial for all their smiling. The faces down in the



square were different; each one seemed thinned and sharpened by anticipation; on the faces of many was an unconscious listening look, as though they were on the alert for the footsteps of death. There was some high-pitched, unsmiling jesting, one or two drunken shouts. Don Cristóbal, from his point of vantage over the church porch, roared a command to have one fellow taken out of the ring; he was so drunk that he would have made an instant victim for the bull.

Someone shouted an enquiry—'Where are the bride and groom?' The seats reserved for them were still unoccupied, a state of things that drew a roar of appreciation from the company. When they appeared, a little later, both as serious, as some wag said, as though they had spent the time in church, they were greeted with applause.

There were some attempts at organization among the various groups in the square. The aspirant bull-fighters were to have their turn first; large amateur cuadrillas offered their services, and accepted their instructions as seriously as if a million pesetas hung on the result. Two of the bull-fighters—one of whom had no shirt, and nothing save a pair of ragged trousers roped round his waist—were gipsies; their flat, Moorish faces were inscrutable, they stood like statues in the sun, their red cloths draped over their arms.

Tomás had the good fortune to get into one of the 'cuadrillas'. Juan, watching from above, saw him hopping from foot to foot with excitement, flapping his old percale cape, although his usually merry face was as sober as a judge's. To Juan, who had never before witnessed a capea, the whole scene was utterly unreal.

He had come out of his sleep to find Tomás shaking his shoulder.

'Wake up, wake up! Don't you want to see me with old Satanás?'

As Juan grunted, turned over and sleepily rubbed his eyes, he found Tomás looking at him curiously.

'What have you done with Manuela to make her so angry with you?'

'I? I have done nothing. I've just—slept.'

Tomás flung back his head and roared with laughter; then, as though in apology, smote Juan on the shoulder.

'*Hombre*, I'm afraid you're hopeless! If it is left to you El Balarín will never become a grandfather,' he declared. His merry face grew sober. 'You'll have to take care,' he cautioned Juan seriously, 'or people will begin to say you can't do it.'

'Go to the devil,' retorted Juan, who had wakened in a bad temper. But, as he followed Tomás, he was thinking: So that was what she wanted! He was guiltily aware of having missed an opportunity which might not occur again. After all that wine it would have been easy—if only he had been able to keep awake! But had she really expected him—a little girl like that?

A dull fury burned in him as he leaned over the balcony rail, looked at the scene below. The lovely dazzle and excitement of the morning had vanished; in its place was something sinister, something that took possession of Juan exactly as his former excitement had done. He scowled down at Tomás, who lifted an eager friendly face to receive his friend's encouragement.

The bull had been conveniently penned in a granary that opened on the square itself. The opening of the doors was a matter that presented much difficulty, for here were none of the pulley and rope and arrangements you get behind the toril. Practically since daybreak the ardent citizens had been pounding on the doors, stirring up old Satanás to the anticipation of his duties. Muffled roars came once or twice from behind the doors, and in response to protracted hammering a deadly crash and the trembling of the doors from top to bottom warned the performers of what they had to expect.

The difficulty of opening the doors lay in the fact that to get them open two long iron staples had to be run back on either side; these had been carefully oiled, but even so they presented a problem: the slightest sound of the bars might cause an anticipatory rush of the bull, which would burst the doors open before the men in charge had time to get out of the way, and result in damage to somebody. So when Don Cristóbal, who

invariably presided over this ceremony, gave the signal, and the bull-fighters moved over to the farther side of the square, and when the trumpet blew, which was the signal to liberate old Satanás, a silence spread over the audience which was almost breathless.

All those who were not taking an active part in the bull-fight were clambering out of the square, with varying degrees of haste as their age and dignity allowed them; the younger fry were scaling the trees that surrounded the square, those who were willing to pay a few centimos for the privilege were mounting the improvised tiers of the scaffolding erected behind the barricados.

Almost silently the bars slid back, the two men who manipulated them watching each other so as to time the run backwards with the outward folding doors; on the face of each was terror, some of it real, much of it assumed, for your Andalusian peasant is before all things an actor, and each felt that he carried, as prologue, some of the responsibilities of the drama; each clowned his terror a little, as, with a shout that echoed in the darkness of the granary, he rushed backward, dragging the door between himself and the bull.

From Tomás's description, Juan had visualized one of those bulls like houses Don José was fond of describing. The beast that trotted out into the sunlight was, relatively, a small one: rusty black, with a shimmer of muscle beneath the pelt; from either side of the broad forehead sprang the inimical arches of the horns, one of which, as Juan noticed, was splintered at the tip. The bull was a good fighting bull: all its weight was carried in its shoulders; its small feet were planted widely in the curling dust.

The instant the bull appeared a burst of cheering broke out round the ring. *'Olé, Satanás!'* *'Buenos días, toro!'* *'Huh, toro!'* *'Arré!'* Hats were waved, sticks flourished, in greeting to the bull, the upholder of the town's fame. Like many small towns, this one was too poor to allow its fighting bull to be killed. Satanás had made himself celebrated through many capeas;

Tomás had spoken truly when he said, 'He knows something, that one!'

He stood now, with reared head, thin tail quivering slightly, but otherwise still. Not for him any theatrical concessions to his audience; such cheap stuff as pawing the earth, snuffing into it, flinging up his head and sending his voice to echo round the square was for those bulls who had to make their effect and be quick about it, before the matador solved their problem once for all with the sword. It was an occasion of deadly seriousness for old Satanás; he knew exactly what was expected of him, and what he meant to do; he had all his tricks pat, and knew that the audience realized as much. He could take his time, and think out surprises in the brain behind that dark forehead.

The bull-fighters shuffled with their feet, spread out their capes to incite; one of the gipsies took a few paces forward, moving like a bunch of steel wires.

Suddenly, without giving the least warning, the bull charged. Down went his head sideways, as though with the right horn—the splintered one—he would cut the earth from corner to corner of the square. The suddenness of this opening took the bull-fighters by surprise, scattered their group—several went flying towards the barricado, among the chaff of the safely bestowed audience, but the rest stood their ground, desperately citing the bull from different points, relying on his rush to send him crashing into the stout fencing of logs around the square.

But, while they did this, Satanás executed the manœuvre for which, among his own people, he was famous. With no apparent check in his stride, he swerved almost at right angles; down went the formidable head once more—and up—with the first victim impaled on the splintered horn.

*Jesúcristo!* The capea had begun with a sensation. Old Satanás was out to-day to enhance his reputation. The hullabaloo was overwhelming. Not two minutes, hardly a minute in the ring, and he had got his first man. Juan, his own face yellow as tallow, his mouth open, the breath coming sharply, could see the face of the man who had received the cornada, blank with terror

as he rocked up and down on the horn which had got him in the lower part of the back. *Huh, toro! Huh, toro!* The others were doing their best to make the beast fling him off, but the fearfulness and danger of the capeas lie in the fact that the fighters are handicapped, not only by their lack of skill and the restricted space in which they have to move, but by the freshness of the bull. There are no horses, no picadores, no banderilleros to prepare him for the act of the cape, which normally comes when his power is reduced. He is undamaged, in complete possession of all his wits and powers.

He charged down the square again, carrying his now fainting victim upon the horn. A woman screamed. Juan saw one of the gipsies rush in and seize the bull's tail, twisting it with both hands, as a washer-woman twists linen. Satanás lowered his head, the man fell sprawling in the dust, which turned a bright crimson where he lay; the whole square became the scene of a monstrous scuffle as the bull pranced from one to another, now wrenching the red rag from the hands of one man and dragging it through the dust on a horn tip. There was no attempt at art in these manoeuvres; no man dared go nearer than five or six yards from the bull, and the cape-work was wild, formless, and, so far as the bull was concerned, almost without effect. The wounded man was hoisted across the barricado, and died, almost at once, in the inexperienced hands of the doctor.

And suddenly the bull stood still again. The onlookers drew their breath through their teeth; they knew of old that his moments of stillness were his most ominous.

In the room at whose window Juan sat, he could hear the heavy breathing of the spectators. Manuela was among them; she did not come near Juan, but contented herself with throwing at him looks of the most concentrated scorn and malice; it seemed to him amazing that a child's face could convey so much. He too was angry, and occasionally glared back. On Manuela's farther side was a middle-aged, pregnant woman, who held her hands tightly over her distended body, and stared down into the square with eyes like currants in a leaden face. A man

spat across Juan's shoulder, and, by way of compensation, offered him a drink of water from an earthen crock—which, after one glance at the man's face, which was covered with a disease of the skin, he politely refused. He felt as though he had fallen into a very pit of savagery, yet something in himself responded to it. He had a fearful sense of having lost his own personality; as though being with these people, drinking their wine, sharing their food, had infected him with the same brutal spirit which seemed to be in all of them. The square and its occupants appeared to him hazed with a red mist; the forked shadows of the bull-fighters took on an evil significance. The sun, beating straight into his face across the now empurpled tops of the sierras, held a savage magic. He was prepared for anything—anything——

The gipsies were now displaying a hideous courage which would have brought scorn upon them in the formal *corrida*, so little relation had it to art or skill. Gradually they were working in closer to the bull; at last one had the temerity to allow the shoulder of old *Satanás* to jostle him, in the bull's mad rush after his companion. Juan watched Tomás darting from side to side with his ugly humped movement; working in now like the rest; anxious to prove his valour publicly. He had one or two narrow escapes, which, instead of making Juan's heart sink to the pit of his stomach, acted on him as some kind of stimulus. Two others had received unimportant *cornadas*, and had retired covered with glory, as their garments were covered with gore. Someone executed a passable natural, and Juan, as behoved one of the *afición* applauded.

As the bull became more and more exhausted, more people poured into the ring; instigated by the shouts of the spectators, or by their own vanity, they started to take liberties with the animal, which, as the shreds of its dignity were torn from it, waxed more and more dangerous. Now it barely moved, save to make some deadly rush that ended in defeat, with the mob jeering on every side. The look in the eye of the bull was now the look of death; if he caught anyone, he would finish him, but he was getting very tired.

Some tipsy dare-devil hooked the crook of his stick round the bull's horn, and a laugh went up as a toss of the powerful head splintered it. In the crowded space it was now almost impossible for the bull to avoid hitting someone; a youth of sixteen went flying through the air, and at the same moment a piercing shriek, followed by a groan, at Juan's elbow made him turn sharply. The woman on his left had been taken with her labour pains, and the rest of the women were crowding round her. Embarrassed to be present at such a scene, Juan, without thinking, threw his leg across the balcony rail.

As his feet hit the dust of the square, he realized, with a shock that drove through him, the fact that he was actually in the ring with the bull.

He could see nothing for the crowds that jostled him, that drove backwards and forwards with the movements of the bull. He felt himself shouldered aside by the supporters of a limp figure from whose fingers still hung a rag of red material. The rag dropped at Juan's feet, and his mind registered the fact that the bull had found another victim, as he bent mechanically to free his ankles of the stuff that dragged across them.

Suddenly a yell went up, and the crowd surged sideways in a mighty wave. Juan, left for a moment in an open space, saw the bull charging down on him, looking at him, and with the right horn lowered to scoop him up. His whole body seemed to go dead; his instinctive movement of flight was checked by the instantaneous remembrance that he was the son of El Bailarín. The movement that he made was purely mechanical and hereditary. Without the remotest notion of what to do, he shook out the cloak, which opened like a banner. Instead of Juan, the bull saw a great crimson cloud that fired his weary brain. He plunged for it. Icy with horror, Juan did he knew not what with the cape; he was positive afterwards that he had not achieved any of the classic manœuvres his father had taught him. His feet were not together; he just stood and flapped his cape like a tiro. With a drugged sensation he felt the bull's body rush past him like a gust of sultry air. He knew afterwards what he should

have done, of course; he should have given the cape that flick in the opposite direction to the bull's rush, which would have checked the animal and doubled it on itself; he should have finished his veronica—it was a veronica of a sort—with the recorte. He had seen this done by the great matadors again and again; he could achieve it admirably himself—against the thin air. While he stood there shuddering he felt himself flung out of the way.

It was Tomás who leapt in front of him, with cape outspread. With drained face, and a yell of anguish and despair, Tomás leapt at the bull, who was coming round again, and, using both hands, nailed the cape across his horns. The two horn-tips came crackling through the rotten material, the swing of his head caught Tomás sidelong and ripped his trousers.

The dust came up towards Juan's face. The son of El Bailarín sank swooning in the arena.

'Don't tell me you fainted,' said Tomás positively. 'You were drunk. It would have been all right if you'd been sick, as I told you. The wine's nice, but it's bad. There's no getting away from it, it's bad. And your veronica was grand. It was the best of the afternoon. El Bailarín himself might have been proud of it.'

The moon was up—a great flat silver disc in a sky of darkest emerald—when the boys again found themselves upon the hill-track with their faces set towards home.

Both were reeling with fatigue: Tomás's scratch, which he had proudly had iodized before the traditional poison had time to do its work, was deep enough to be painful, and sufficiently awkwardly placed to make him limp. Their progress was slow; both were resigned to the fact that they were unlikely to make Granada before dawn of the following day.

Juan walked like one in a dream; slowly, very slowly, his own personality was returning to him, as though an evil spell were dissolving in the dews of night. All the events of the past day seemed now to him like a nightmare, from which he had awakened leaning on someone's arm, someone who had picked him, the



son of El Bailarín, up from the dust of the square. No one seemed to realize that he had fainted; he realized gratefully that Tomás's heroism had drawn all attention from its object, himself. He had joined thankfully in fêting Tomás, who was the hero of the day.

They had gone back to his mother's house, where the evening passed in carnival, while the mountains gulped the sun, and the sudden night brought out the lights of the town. Manuela would have nothing to do with them, but other girls would; both the boys were hustled, jostled, kissed—Tomás for his bravery; Juan because he was as handsome as an angel and the son of El Bailarín: he had also done something handsome with the cape—no one was clear what; no one particularly cared. His excitement and his rage both over, he was now stupefied, submitting himself blindly to whatever came his way. He was dragged to the hovel where the woman was, by now, delivered of her child, and made to stand godfather to a little wizened object more like a monkey than the offspring of human beings.

'Yes, that veronica of yours was perfect,' Tomás was repeating. 'Just as if you'd been citing bulls all your life. *Hombre*, what I'd give to have a drop of matador's blood in me! Let me tell you not many bull-fighters have come up against a bull like ours! You can tell that to your father, if you like.'

Juan had not the least desire to mention the incident to his father, but he realized that it was his duty to do so, in order that Tomás might be suitably rewarded for his courage.

'What a pity you didn't fancy little Manuela!' said Tomás, slyly. He stood still to rest his leg for a moment, and laid his hand affectionately on Juan's shoulder. '*Hombre!* That would have been a day for you—if you'd fought a bull and kissed a girl! You'd have known about the two best things in the world.'

A great and lonely regret penetrated Juan's whole being. Once again he had failed himself; in the crisis of such an emotion as the day had afforded him, he could surely have shown himself as much of a man as Tomás. His mean performance in the ring

covered his soul with shame. He was even craven enough to accept Tomás's explanation of his swoon.

'Tomás,' he said suddenly. 'Do you know there is no such person as God?'

Tomás, a Catholic for practical purposes, looked startled.

'*Hombre!* You'll be getting yourself into trouble with Don Antonio if you talk like that.'

'I mean there's no personal God,' said Juan carefully. 'God isn't *Him*; He's *It*.'

'Have it your own way,' said Tomás, wagging his head sagely. 'I don't bother much about God. Now the Holy Virgin is quite another matter. When my uncle was down with bronchitis in the winter, my mother asked me to light a candle to Nuestra Señora de la Angustias for him.'

'And did he get better?' asked Juan sceptically.

'Why, of course he did! She's the best Virgin that ever was for miracles. That's why they gave her her crown, isn't it? You don't get a crown like that for nothing, even if you're a Virgin.'

'And do you believe in hell, and purgatory, and heaven?' asked Juan. Tomás shrugged his shoulders; he had no interest in this kind of conversation. Then his eyes twinkled.

'I heard a good tale about that the other day!' he began. 'A man came into the shop the other day with a priest, and they got talking. The man said, "I'm glad Mario Tonto is dead." "That's very wrong of you," said the priest. "Why are you glad he's dead?" "I was owing him twenty pesetas. But I'll tell you what, father," he said. "One doesn't want to quarrel with the people 'up there,' so when I die I'll tell my wife to put twenty pesetas in my coffin; then I can square it up with Mario when I meet him."'

Behind his laughter Juan was envious of Tomás's light-hearted and practical acceptance of all matters on which he was not prepared to argue. His simple, good-natured features showed as little intellectual awareness as an animal's. It occurred to him that, all unconsciously, Tomás had managed to adapt himself to that Power of which Miguel spoke, which seemed now to be

spinning him, Juan, as on a wheel. He felt so great and uncomfortable an inferiority to Tomás at that moment that it was necessary to assert his nobility by some fine gesture, such as his father might have made.

'You were a great hero to-day, Tomás,' he said, a trifle grandly. 'Anything might have happened but for your dressing the bull up like that. I shall not forget it.'

'It was nothing—nothing at all,' protested Tomás, crimson with pleasure. 'A nice row I'd have got into if I'd allowed the son of El Bailarín to get hit by the bull! And anyone could have done it after you'd got him all fuddled with that cape-work of yours.'

Deeply moved by this humility, Juan flung his arm round the shoulder of Tomás and kissed him.

'You'll be a great matador one day, Tomás,' he said generously. Tomás shook a wise head.

'Not I. But you—when you make your first appearance in the ring at Madrid, perhaps you'll remember to-day, and allow me to pass you your sword.'

'I'd die sooner than be a matador,' said Juan violently.

The two boys stood staring at each other in the moonlight, under the black edges of the mountains.

'*Hombre*, I'd no idea you felt like that about it!' breathed Tomás. Juan laughed recklessly and bitterly now that he had given away his secret.

'Well, now you know. Now you see how it is with me,' he muttered. Tomás seemed totally bereft of words; his mouth opened and closed grotesquely; he shrugged his shoulders, made a resigned gesture with his hands, and finally gripped Juan's in a clasp that hurt.

'That's bad, *hombre*. I'll say that's very bad.'

## Thirteen

**D**ON JOSÉ had been very much moved when he heard from the two boys the history of the day's adventures. With a resurgence of the extravagance of his professional years, he presented Tomás with twenty pesetas—a fortune to the latter, who seized his idol's hand and kissed it with gratitude. Juan's eyes moistened; he found something unbearably pathetic in Tomás's humility—a humility of which, on so many occasions, he had himself taken a base advantage. He was happy, too, to know that he shared with the loyal and devoted Tomás a secret which had eaten like a canker at the secret recesses of his own heart; and, little though he knew himself to deserve it, he was not blind to the look of gratification which overspread Don José's face when the latter heard that his son had actually taken part in the capea. Don José pulled his ear affectionately, and called him a little fool, but Juan knew that his father was delighted by the unexpected turn things had taken. He could hardly bear it, would have borne it even less had he known what was to be its direct outcome.

Don José was unable, in those days, to disentangle his mind from the thoughts of Pilár, which during his solitude had woven themselves so closely into his silences that he was quite unable, for any consecutive period time, of keeping them at bay. All his sluggish chivalry had been roused by the terrible scene he had witnessed between her and Doña Mercédes, when the girl's meekness had impressed itself upon his mind as deeply as her beauty had done. He saw her as a martyr, and had almost—not

quite—come to look upon himself as a party to her martyrdom. She would have a bad time with Pepe.

He had seen her once or twice since that bad day at the Carmen de los Arrayánes, but never without her grandmother; and always he came away from such encounters with a sense that there, if he but knew how to set about it, was a consolation for his aching heart. For his heart ached continuously these days, until he had come to be aware of it almost as a physical sensation. He was desperately troubled, and up at the Carmen de los Arrayánes, in the presence of Pilár Borrás, he found peace: that was what it came to.

The more he thought of it, the more impatient he became for the marriage to take place which should bring her under his roof, within daily reach of his sight and hearing. It became his passionate desire that he should be the one to comfort her for the shortcomings of Pepe which could not fail, sooner or later, to make themselves apparent to her. When that time came, Don José had a vision of the pair of them sitting together salving each other's wounds. Having betrayed her, he would work out his salvation by helping to comfort her for the betrayal. After all, he argued, the girl could not do better for herself than to marry Pepe; she had, apparently, no other suitor, and at her grandmother's death would be entirely forlorn, an heiress, prey to any rogue who might take a fancy to her fortune. He, Don José, could at any rate watch over her; see that in all circumstances she was properly treated, help her to blind herself to things that might threaten her married happiness.

At times he became entirely the prey of a monstrous terror that Balarinito, by some act of public folly, would forfeit the whole situation. This thought drove him quite crazy, and, in the effort to escape from it, his whole nature threw back to the days of his own irresponsibility; nothing that was not immediate, easily to be grasped, and self-gratifying seemed to him to be of the least value. In such a mood he became positive that the game was already lost, and, in order to anæsthetize his nerves, he himself indulged some minor indiscretions, which were unlikely

to come to the ears of Doña Mercédes. But, having drunk his fill, having listened to the flamenco, and lain with a gipsy, the pale dawn found Don José always driving back to the Casa del Matador in the same tragic mood. For the first time he realized the truth of his own mental condition: he was entirely conscious, for the first time, that he was a very unhappy man.

He had been very glad of Juan's return from Sanpedro—Juan, with his coat-sleeves absurdly too short for him and his hair almost as absurdly too long. There was about him so strange an air of innocence and beauty that Don José's heart swelled with fatherliness and pride.

A few days after the capea, Don José announced to Juan that they were going on an expedition. A friend of his, Don Pascuale Moreno, had a few years ago started a small bull-breeding ranch outside Cordoba, and had for some time been pressing Don José to go over and see his stock. He had now made up his mind to do so, and intended Juan to accompany him. They were travelling, as Don José usually travelled, by car: an arrangement which would ordinarily have been too extravagant for Don José to consider had been economically settled by the driver's fortunately wishing to visit his old mother, who lived near the ranch; he had agreed to take them for the price of the petrol and his food on the way. This meant that they could easily make the journey both ways in a day and a night.

Juan was charmed by the prospect, which would give him a whole day in his father's company, and he hoped, if lucky, to get a chance to run into Cordoba.

His father's ceremonious reception at the house of Don Pascuale gave its customary thrill to Juan. After they had eaten, the three men—for Juan, having had his sixteenth birthday at Sanpedro, was now entitled to call himself a man—set out on horseback for a cursory survey of the grazing herds, and were presently conducted by Don Pascuale to the corrales, where, in anticipation of Don José's visit, he had enclosed some two-year-olds which had been approved for the ring. With them, also on

horseback, and in a state of high excitement, went the two small sons, aged ten and twelve, of Don Pascuale.

After Don José had expressed his approval of the young bulls (he did not think much of them; he had no great opinion of these bred-down animals that modern matadors favour), Don Pascuale turned to his celebrated guest and told him with a shy smile that his two little boys were looking forward to being bull-fighters. 'Already,' he said, with a shrug of his shoulders, 'they elude me—the villains!—and I catch them knocking the little calves about. Thrashing makes no difference; what is one to do about it?'

Don José gravely agreed that thrashing never yet prevented a born bull-fighter from carrying out his destiny; and then Don Pascuale made the suggestion that had evidently been in his mind the whole time. The children had made him promise to ask Don José, he said, if he would look on while they 'toreared' with a couple of bull-calves. When Don José gave his consent the two small boys threw themselves off their ponies and fled yelling round the side of the corral, where evidently, in anticipation of this event, preparations of some sort had been made. A few minutes later a diminutive bull-calf, which would obviously never make its appearance in the ring, trotted into view.

Juan caught his father's eye and a flash of understanding passed between them. At the age of Victoriano, the elder of the two boys, El Bailarín had already been tackling full-sized bulls. Don José sat with an admirable gravity while the little boys, in miniature bull-fighters' suits, strutted and tumbled, and flapped their capes at an animal about as dangerous as a tame kitten, Don Pascuale meanwhile watching the spectacle with the inane smile of fond parenthood.

'That was not so bad! That was not at all so bad, was it?' he would enquire excitedly, when it became impossible wholly to contain his pride in the puerile exhibition.

Don José turned upon him the slow, blank gaze of one who humours a defective, and agreed it was not so bad. How could a person who had followed the bull-fight from his youth see any virtue in these capers, he was wondering.

At the end of the spectacle, when the small boys, red-faced, came up to receive their congratulations, it seemed to occur to Don Pascuale that he had not paid sufficient deference to Don José's fatherhood. With the proud Victoriano in his arms, he said smilingly:

'And I suppose Juan is beginning to do you credit now with the muleta?'

Don José's eye took on a slow, ruminating expression; he looked about him as though he were seeking something.

'He has not yet had much opportunity with bulls,' he said slowly. 'Although he was in a capea on Tuesday.'

'Not in a capea!' Juan longed to cry out in an agony. 'Accidentally in the ring for a few minutes!' He turned his head away to hide the burning blush that ran up his cheek. Don José was murmuring something to Don Pascuale. Juan heard the words, 'a good opportunity'—'Yes, yes.' He dared not look round; he knew too well without looking what was being arranged, and his blood ran cold. The head of his father's horse appeared on a level with his own, his father's hand came on his shoulder, Don José pointed with his riding-whip. 'Do you think you could manage that one over there, my son?'

Juan wanted to cry out that he had not handled a cape for months; that he had never actually been confronted with a bull, and that it was unjust to force him to go through with it in front of strangers. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth; his father's hand, again on his shoulder, tightened its pressure. Juan understood its message: 'You cannot shame me by refusing in front of Don Pascuale.' It struck him that his father must have a truly extraordinary belief in his abilities to risk such a challenge in front of Don Pascuale. For a moment, when his heart seemed to stop, he hesitated; then he began stiffly to descend from his horse. He was too proud to mention the matter of his ribs, which were only just out of their strappings, and still felt to Juan something like egg-shells, liable to go with the least pressure. He did not know that his face was as white as milk, as he forced his lips to answer:

'I dare say, father. Which one do you mean?'



He knew from Don José's expression that he had greatly pleased his father, although possibly Don José had never even visualized the chance of his refusal. The small boys were shouting; a cape appeared, seemingly out of thin air. Juan was taking off his coat and hitching his trousers. The bull-calf which Don José had selected was a harmless-looking specimen, although well grown, near its time for testing.

Juan had two opposite desires in his mind: one, rising from his vanity, was to give a brilliant performance, a practically impossible ambition, since it is one thing to perform your suertes correctly at clear air, and another to perform them with a bull coming at you; and the other, rising from his cowardice, was to make such an execrable exhibition of himself that his father should never again ask him to take the cape in hand. The latter, for Don José's sake, was impossible to do deliberately; Juan knew that, unfortunately, he was only too likely to do it. His brain went stone-cold as he stepped forward with the cape in his hands.

Don José had not set his son an impossible task. His experienced eye had told him that the particular calf which he had picked out for Juan's testing was never likely to make its appearance in the ring. It was *buey*, which meant that, after testing, it would be castrated and kept for the butcher. A clumsy, well-meaning beast, but devoid of courage. It was some time before it accepted the invitation of Juan's cape, which he had started by trailing in the approved fashion to find out which horn the youngster favoured. Don José smiled; quite correct, but, with a fool animal like that, not likely to reveal much. His face became grave again as Juan took the cape in both hands for his first veronica.

What followed was to Juan a scuffle that lasted during eternity. The young bull had more courage than it showed in the first place, and its rushes were direct, eager, and purposeful. It could run like a deer and showed a disposition, which Juan did not immediately grasp, to use its left horn. But it was, as Don José had perceived, stupid; a *Muira* would have found out the neces-

sary tricks to dispose of Juan's handling in ten minutes; Juan at least had the advantage of this beast, in that, if he kept his head, he could baffle it, cause it to lose its self-confidence. Its interest was in the cape, and not in the man; it was not very long before Juan actually managed to pass the bull clear round his body—not very close the first time, but closer the second. Don José could have done the same thing half a dozen times with the same bull, but, after the second turn, Juan's valour or his art failed him and he fixed it with a sharp recorte. His brain still felt cold as ice; he did nothing remarkable, but what he did was done neatly, with conviction and with an obvious instinct for the right thing that brought a glitter of satisfaction to Don José's eye. The boy had none of Pepe's exhibitionist style and was clearly frightened, yet he was doing well. Naturally he would be lost with a mature bull, but, of the many young bull-fighters whose initial efforts he had watched, Don José remembered none who showed a more definite promise than Juan.

At the end of twelve minutes, Don José called Juan out of the corral. Juan waited for a prudent moment, and made his exit when there was no need for him to scramble or rush. Don José said very little, but Juan knew, and his heart sank in knowing, that he had satisfied his father.

On the drive home the conversation took place that Juan anticipated and dreaded. They were almost invisible to one another in the dark; only the tip of Don José's cigar glowed or dimmed. They were both tired. Don José had been dozing; Juan, whose nerves were too jumpy to doze, had been staring at the blackness of the night. It was cloudy; at intervals a beam of uncertain moonlight showed him the moving fields and trees.

'Are you glad to come back from Sanpedro?' His father's voice made him start violently. How tired that voice sounded, how old. A gust of tenderness made Juan lay his hand on his father's knee as he replied:

'Oh, yes.'

'I had begun to fancy you were not happy in Granada,' said Don José heavily.

'Not happy in Granada! At home—with you!' The emotion in Juan's voice was genuine. Something suggested itself to him; he began to speak quickly. 'Shall I tell you what I want to do when I am a little older, father? I want to be the greatest poet Granada has ever known! I want to have something written about me, when I'm dead, like Tolosa's verses on Villaespesa:

*'Tu pasa por la tierra los mortales  
Jamás tu excelso numen olvidarán.  
Y las musas, llorando de pesares  
Tu frente moribunda besarán.'*

Juan recited the lines in the florid manner common to the native poets of his town, with some subconscious notion that Don José's interest might be distracted to his dramatic gift.

'Is that all you want to do—write poetry?' enquired Don José, with assumed severity.

'I—I should like to experiment in free verse, father,' stammered Juan, aware that Don José would not know what free verse was. 'And I'd like, some day,' he continued desperately, 'to write something as good as Becquer's *Al ver mis horas de fiebre*. That's marvellous! Do you know, father, he wrote that when he was dying of starvation—in little low cafés in Madrid?'

'That is a fine profession!' said Don José scornfully. 'To write poetry and die of starvation! It is very noble to write good poetry,' he continued. 'Poetry liberates a man's soul, his passions, his deepest feelings. But there are many bad poets, and you might be one of them.'

'I might,' owned Juan, crestfallen.

A long silence fell between them; the car, jolting over some invisible obstacle in the road, flung Juan upon his father. As he lay there for a moment he became aware of some strange, unhappy tension in his father's body. He put up a hand to his father's face, as he might have done in childhood, and whispered, 'Father, what is it? I know that something is making you sad. Tell me. I love you dearly.' Never had the barrier between them seemed so completely broken down.

Don José took his son's hand and gently drew it down, to hold it on his knee.

'There are so many things——' he began, with an uncertainty which to Juan was heart-breaking. 'So many things, so difficult to understand—one cannot tell——' He broke off sharply, and his next words came in an exceedingly bitter cry. 'Don't betray me!' he said. 'Don't betray me!'

'What do you mean, father?' cried Juan, in terror.

But Don José had recovered his self-control. He released Juan's hand, gave him a not unkindly little push away from him and drew his cigar-case from his pocket.

'I have a good many things to worry me at present,' he said, in a deliberate voice. 'You have heard about Miguel?' he said abruptly.

'Why—yes,' said Juan, hoping to heaven his father would not ask him how he had heard. He had not been able, obviously, to open the subject since his return, and Don José had not up to the present mentioned it.

'Your brother is a revolutionary,' said Don José sternly. 'You know what that means. I have finished with him.'

Juan bit back the justification of Miguel which rose to his lips; of course, his father must not know that he had seen Miguel. There was another long pause.

'And Pepe——' said Don José; what it cost him to speak of Pepe in anything but terms of adulation no one knew. 'Things are not going as well with Pepe as I could wish.'

Juan remembered what Miguel had said of Pepe: 'Bailarinito's a rotten matador. I pity El Bailarín when he finds out about Bailarinito.' Was his father finding out? Again his heart swelled with love and pity. How could Don José ever survive if Bailarinito were to fail him?

'I'm sorry, father,' he said quietly. 'Perhaps—perhaps he has had bad bulls.'

Don José was again silent.

'Juan, will you go to the school at Malaga?'

The blow had fallen. Driving his nails into the palms of his

hands, Juan tried to think of a formula of refusal which would not wound his father.

'You pleased me very much to-day,' Don José was saying. 'You did better than I expected. Of course you have the old-fashioned style—which some day people may find out is the only style after all!' he added viciously. 'You are my son, and from me you have inherited the makings of a bull-fighter. Do not give me your answer now,' he concluded. 'I shall ask you some other time. Until then—think it over.'

'I am sixteen, father.' Juan could not forbear saying.

'It is old,' conceded Don José. 'But when the aptitude is there—— We will say no more about it for the present.'

This dark episode of the days immediately following Juan's return from Sanpedro was shortly followed by one so pleasant that, had it not been for its climax, it would have almost succeeded in wiping out, for a while at least, the memory of the first.

The hour was past ten. Juan, in his bedroom, but not in bed, was writing, door and windows open in the attempt to obtain a current of air. The heat was stifling—earthquake weather, the people said. He had just succeeded in writing something which he thought was very beautiful; he was not quite certain of all that it meant, but that only made it, to Juan, more beautiful. It had sometimes latterly seemed to him that, when he took up his pencil to write, someone whispered the words in his ear. He could hardly remember *thinking* the words which he found he had written on paper. Don José found him reading to himself, from the sheet of paper in his hand.

'It is night. The soul of Granada leans over her lovers like an old Moorish mistress of imperishable beauty and wisdom surpassing the wisdom of the stars. The scent of her bosom is the scent of balsam and syringa; the song of nightingales is in her widespread hair; all of passion and delight, all that is tragic and beautiful, all betrayal, frustration and despair, the

loveliness of lust, the folly of innocence, the triumph of heaven and the triumph of hell, the little value of human life, the import of a rose in a gipsy's mouth, the fluttering snows, the trumpet-blast of the sun, the tears of Boabdil, the infidelity of a Sultana, the Hail, Mary of a hero, and the rose-red dust whose colour is derived from the shedding of human blood—are in her voice. Her voice is the guitar.'

Don José stared at his son. Did Juan know what he was writing about? Speaking literally, Juan did not; but he leaned back in his chair and smiled up at his father, with heightened colour in his cheeks. It was the first time Don José had seen any of his writing. 'The loveliness of lust and the folly of innocence' puzzled him rather; the abstracts had been the other way about to begin with, and sounded rather thin and sentimental; then something had prompted him to transpose them, and for some reason they sounded rather fine. He hoped Don José would not ask him to explain them.

Don José's dislike for admitting that he did not gather the meaning of anything saved Juan the awkward explanation. Instead he remarked:

'I am going to the wine-shop. There will be singing. Do you want to come?'

Juan nearly jumped out of his skin. He had always longed to accompany his father where there was singing, but had never dared to suggest it. These gatherings of Don José's friends, unless they took place in his own patio, were not for boys. Apart from his joy in the music, he had now that of realizing that his father was prepared to treat him in future as a man.

'Oh, father! Will Don Alonso be there?'

Don José nodded, and walked out of the room. Juan flung down his pencil, dragged a comb through his wavy hair, and rushed after his father.

From the inner patio at Trini's rose a hum of voices, across which the experimental tuning of a guitar drew its riband of sound.

The crowd assembled there was a catholic one. Trini herself, seated in her armchair half-way between bar and patio, kept an eye on what went on in both quarters. Trini herself was ancient as the hills; the piled, brown locks of her hair, Medusa's locks rendered in bronze, were given the lie by the antiquity of her face, patched on the cheek-bones with a withered rose. Thin as a knife-edge, fretful for a vanished comeliness, perpetually haggard, she never smiled; her eyes of infinite dolour looked out through a network of wrinkles as she gave her claw to a favoured patron. '*Qué tal, señora?*' '*Mala, muy mala*; the pain is like knitting-needles—it won't let me sleep. *Madre mia*, it is bad to be old.' She looked askance upon the gay young blades who addressed her by her full name, Trinidad. Her lover, more ancient than herself, sat hunched in a thin alpaca suit, keeping a contemptuous eye upon the company.

Her majordomo and contemporary, active as a sand-eel, took charge of the headgear of the caballeros: a silvery creature, Antonia, with more devil in her one eye than most people have in two, and hair gathered into a button as unsophisticated as Trini's coiffure was the reverse.

Tomás, unable to take his eyes from his idol, El Bailarín, was fitting noiselessly, serving the company with endless *chatos* of the manzanilla which was merely prelude to the serious consideration of the evening. Someone was in the bar, busily preparing that. The great bowl, filled to the brim with red wine to which peaches were yielding up their bouquet, tinkled with the miniature icebergs which a busy spoon dispersed about its surface. From time to time, Tomás, armed with a long stick, clambered on top of the wine-casks, and poked out the dogs that wandered in to indulge their armours in what they considered a safe retreat.

There were no women; a prostitute or two drifted into the bar, flung a hopeful eye upon the patio, and was glared out by Trini. This was not going to be a night for *las niñas*.

Near the guitarrista sat Chico, the lame ex-matador, who was there to open the evening's singing; his two sticks were crossed

between his knees; in repose his face was very sweet, his smile gentle and serene. To Juan it was incredible that this mild soul had ever gone into the ring on a sweltering day to kill a creature that had done him no wrong; to look at him, thought Juan, one would say he could not kill a wasp.

Near him, on his left, the enormous bulk of Pedro; his fat fists clenched upon bulging thighs, his thick white neck bursting through the open collar of his shirt. He too smiled modestly, unassumingly; the curly hair on his head, the soft, womanish curves of his face upon which the unwanted flesh was encroaching, gave him the look of an immensely overgrown schoolboy. He was very shy, and could hardly ever be persuaded to sing; never when distinguished company was present.

The gay soul Manuel, true *simpatico*, ardent devotee of the flamenco, flickered through the gathering, in the intervals of preparing his *sangrilla*, like a jester. His peculiar gift was that of sketching a dance with the faintest possible movements of hips and arms; the ghost of a dance it was, all borne out by Manuel's expressive face and eyes.

There was distinguished company that night; it was not Pedro's night. For, in addition to various individuals who had nothing save their appreciation to contribute to the night's entertainment, and who therefore remained modestly in the background, there was El Bailarín; there was his friend, Don Alonso Quintero.

This one, another of Juan's heroes, had more than patronage to bestow. Upon his mood, upon the expression of his temperament, the evening stood or fell. He was volatile, he was erratic; if things did not please him he would rise, take his hat, and go home to his family, who, owing as much as they enjoyed of his society to his more sombre moments, probably welcomed them. Clearly he knew his own importance, and presumed upon it, but with a charm, a geniality, most people found irresistible. Now one of the friends leant on his shoulder, another was engaged in flattering and cajoling him into the state of mind most conducive to a successful evening. How Juan longed to add his incense to the



rest! But modesty kept him in his place. It appeared Alonso did not need much flattery to-night. His laughter came freely, he indulged in jocularities with his intimates, exchanged town gossip with Don José, tried out his voice.

In a humble corner, near the wine-casks, sat the most insignificant member of the company; the youngest son of El Bailarín, waiting until Tomás found an interval in which for awhile to join him. He was, suddenly, paralysedly shy, in spite of the rallying overtures of friendly acquaintances. He was in mortal terror of failing to do credit to El Bailarín, who, since their entrance, had magnificently ignored him. So he was shy, and, being shy, looked beautiful, with brilliant eyes, like one of Murillo's angels. He was quite unconscious of the fact that by merely doing so he was contributing to the success of the evening as surely as though he were himself a singer of the flamenco.

This subtle word, which is a synonym for all that is bizarre and out of the ordinary, has come to be applied particularly to a style of singing which flourishes in Andalucía as it flourishes in no other part of the country. All classes subscribe to it—and were represented in the gathering which gradually silted up Trini's threshold, and slipped noiselessly into what seats might be found, or was content to lean against the wall. There were a lawyer, a rival wine-shop proprietor, two commercial travellers; there were several artisans, an itinerant photographer (himself a flamenco dancer of distinction), a clerk or two, a very smart and well-groomed young man from a garage, the manager of one of the great tourist hotels; there were two ex-matadors, a poet, a priest, and several musicians. There was, in fact, an ideal commingling of types, from which might be gathered how deep and universal is the appeal of flamenco.

It needs no strained or false exoticism, and none of the gaudy elements which, to the uninformed foreigner, represent Spain. Foreign students of the Spanish language may listen to it for twelve months without catching a glimmering of what it is about, and now and again comes one who, without knowing a syllable

of the language, understands it instinctively. It is a thing of the soul. You may meet a taxi-driver who is by way of being a high priest of the flamenco; a gipsy who, from mercenary or other motives, degrades it. It is an attitude of mind; and it reaches its highest and purest expression in such a gathering of comrades as was to be found at Trini's that night, who sing, not for an audience, but because the will to sing is in them. It becomes almost wholly false in the theatre, where famous flamenco singers receive fabulous sums for performances which one may hear bettered any night in the small private patios of dwelling-houses.

The lame Chico edged himself forward on his chair and began to sing in the Andalucian dialect. His body twisted itself, his pale face was distorted, as though his singing was a masochism, a self-torture more subtle than any invented by the Inquisition. To Juan he sang like a blind lark in a cage, like the dying victim of an *auto-da-fé*. The etiolated thread of his voice broke again and again, and ended always in a whisper; through it came the hushed 'Olés' of a responsive and respectful audience. His was the gift of effortless and protracted improvisation that the flamenco demands; it may derive from ancestors who sang upon the balconies and in the courts of the Alhambra—and his theme, like theirs, was love.

Everyone was of the opinion that Chico had made an excellent beginning; the comrades gathered round, shouting their admiration; Chico lowered his head, blushing with modesty, while the guitarrista celebrated the occasion with a roulade; his style of playing was coarse and *coloratura*, but admirably suited to the flamenco. His eyes were everywhere, seeking the source from which the next song might come. For there are no palpable indications; in such a gathering anyone may break into song, and the accompanist must be ready to follow wherever the song may lead. Someone goes quiet; the rest carry on the conversation, seemingly oblivious of the thing fermenting at their elbows; hand the wine, smoke the cigarettes—until someone for no reason cries 'Olé!'—and the song breaks out again, to an accompaniment of hand-clapping and foot-tapping.

The *sangrilla* was a great success; Manuel was complimented on his brewing, and glasses were raised towards Chico. A well-known tune cropped up and everyone joined in, pleasantly but a little absently, for expectancy ran high. Don Alonso had gone quiet, his eyes half closed against the smoke of his cigarette, and the guitarrista was prepared at any moment to abandon his strumming and follow the master.

Juan held his breath; all his vague ambitions crystallized at that moment into the desire that some day he might write a Granadina, and Don Alonso sing it.

He looked with eyes of passionate envy from his father to the singer. How wonderful, how marvellous, were these two men, crowned with their knowledge and experience: El Bailarin, immobile beneath the weight of his obscure and incommunicable greatness, seated like a bronze with all the life in him driven to the narrow slits of his eyes; Don Alonso, with that fatal and equally incommunicable charm. In whatever company these two might find themselves they would be inevitably the dominating factors, by virtue of their mysterious manhood which in them had ripened to a richer maturity than that of their fellows. Wherever the future years might carry him—and Juan, like a true Andalucian, had no desire to be severed from his soil—he could never, never meet two such men as El Bailarin and Don Alonso.

The latter thrust his hand into his coat, and over his diaphragm raising his head. 'Arré! Olé! Alonsito!' yelled the company.

He was a great artist, that one—and knew it. The voice that issued from that mouth, from the resonating cavities of that high-bridged and delicate nose was like the wine of the country. The sun was in it, honey was in it, and wine and fruit and all the spices: the fire of pimento, the salt of olives, and the smoothness of the golden oil. A voice that left a tang on the tongue of the listener! A voice like its owner, '*muy hombre*', that held its own meaning against the meaning of the words. He had chosen for his subject a Colombiana, and Juan sat hugging himself in rapture.

*'Quisiera yo que tu fueras  
la guitarra que me toca  
y entre mis brazos tenerte  
y a besos volverte loca  
y aunque me dieras la muerte  
con los besos de tu boca!'*

. . . The door of the wine-shop had opened once again—not without difficulty—and the individual who entered was obviously concerned with other business than flamenco. Juan recognized the intruder as a taxi-driver, who stood frowning round the company, as though in an attempt to locate someone. Juan saw him whisper to the man nearest him; saw, with surprise, the latter make room for him to pass through, and watched him thread his way to Don José's side. Clearly he had an important message to deliver, for, without waiting for the song to finish, he bent down and spoke in Don José's ear.

Across his father's face Juan marked the momentary passage of a kind of dark ripple, no sooner there than gone, lost in the marmoreal impassivity of Don José's face. But his father was beckoning to him, and while he made his way through the chairs he saw Antonio going for Don José's hat. He reached his father's side and bent down, as the taxi-driver had done.

'Juanito,' said Don José, 'there is bad news. Doña Mercedes is dead, and I am wanted at the Carmen de los Arrayánes.'

## Fourteen

**B**UT THE LAWYER—the man from Madrid—who drew up the documents your grandmother signed?’

‘May God forgive us, señor! That was my uncle from Zaragoza!’

The curious and miasmic effect of sirocco lay on all living things: birds drooped in their cages; Don José had not a dry garment upon him. The ruined beauty of the country lay at his feet—like his ruined hopes; the distant hills were like heaped waves of desert sand, a funnel of dust whirled up in the direction of Santa Fé, the sky was white, the outlines of the Sierras indistinct as though drawn with a silver pencil against the lower portion of the sky. Another onslaught of heat was preparing; at this rate there must certainly be an earthquake before night. Fourteen hours of hot and hellish wind; an old woman lying dead inside the house; and Pilár Borrás, who sat a little apart from Don José with her hands clasped on her lap, offered herself mutely to his condemnation.

With brain and body sagging, he returned once more to the matter in hand.

‘And did you know, my child, that there was no money?’

Pilár fell on her knees in front of Don José, and, with a gesture so abject that it pierced him like a knife, whispered:

‘Yes, Señor Don José, I knew it—all the time.’

‘From the day Pepe asked you to marry him?’ persisted Don José. Why he persisted in his questioning he could not tell. His mind was numb; he simply went on asking questions, and Pilár

answering them, because there seemed nothing else to do. The sick atmospheric aftermath that lay upon them both wrung truth from them, as water is wrung from a wet cloth, leaving them both limp and incapable of resisting each other.

'No, not from that day,' cried Pilár, with a movement of painful denial. 'It was about a month afterwards.'

'Why did you not tell me, my child? Were you afraid? Am I terrible to you?'

'No, no.' She put out a timid hand and touched his knee; the almost imperceptible contact sent a pang through him. 'But what could I do? There were three reasons for my remaining silent.'

'What were your three reasons?' asked Don José; he forgot that she was kneeling to him, and that the stones of the terrace must be bruising her thin knees; on her part, she maintained her painful posture with the devotion of a penitent.

'There was first my grandmother, who made me swear that I would not betray her. She loved me, and she feared that I should be left alone, with no one to look after me, after she was dead. That was the first thing.'

'Yes, yes. But did you not see that this was very bad to Pepe?'

'Yes, Señor Don José. That is the second thing. That is where I am wicked—for which I have given myself so many penances. I too was afraid; I thought of being left alone, of having no roof over my head, of being dependent on someone's charity—and whose? Who was going to help me?—I who could not help myself. I have not been brought up like ordinary girls—I know that now. I have never been to school. I have not the slightest idea how a woman in these days sets out to earn her living. I have been brought up just as grandmother was brought up: to be married; to stay in the casa; to go to church; to have babies, and to obey a husband. Nothing that I have learnt would help me to keep myself alive. . . . I had not *courage*,' whispered Pilár, as one confessing to an unmentionable sin. 'If I had had courage and strength, I should have gone to grandmother and forced her to set me free of my vow. For that I am sure God was angry with me: I felt His anger against me, as it is against

all who do not put their trust in Him. So I made penances for myself until He forgave me. God is good, Señor Don José! God is very good! And I am ready now to be punished by you; do whatever you like with me, I shall not make any complaint. Now that I have confessed my sin to you, I am not afraid of anything any more.'

'And the third thing?' muttered Don José.

'The third thing was when the blessed angel came to tell me that, in spite of all, it was the will of God that I should marry Pepe. "You are to marry Pepe Díaz," it said. "That is to be your purification and your atonement." It told me that I had sinned very greatly, because all the time I knew the goodness of God, and that He would care for me after grandmother was gone; but that I had taken my vow, and that a part of my punishment was to be the keeping of that vow. And it said that in my marriage I was to bring Pepe to the knowledge of God's goodness, and that this was to be my act of atonement for my own sin. Well, Señor Don José, when I was better, I told grandmother all of this, and implored her to send for you and tell you everything. No harm could come to our marriage through it, I told her, because what God has planned is not to be set aside by man. But she said that you would not see it in that way at all, and she made me swear I would say nothing to you about it. What could I do? I had already sworn, and it would have been another sin if I had broken my vow.'

If Pilár's line of defence smacked, to Don José, of Jesuitry, he said nothing about it. The main point of her confession, that she was penniless, had temporarily stunned him. He sat in silence, his walking-stick between his outspread knees, looking down upon the meek parting of her hair. His wrath was drowned in his bewilderment. He could not, for the moment, see what was to be done, and he would even have been inclined to doubt Pilár's sanity, had she not, with a flash of practical initiative he had not expected of her, summoned, by telegram, Doña Mercedes' lawyer from Madrid—whom Don José saw in a flash not to be the specious individual with whom he and Gomez

had discussed the marriage settlements. She had, very wisely, allowed the lawyer to have his say and depart before she made her personal confession, by which time Don José had realized the extent of his victimization. With the lawyer, he had first raged and then collapsed; there was nothing more to be done.

Every penny of the old woman's money—which was considerably less than had been represented—had dribbled away in small sums to the spendthrift son in Zaragoza; who had, evidently with some feeling of services due for his mother's bounty, allowed himself to be made party to the infamous deception of Don José. How the old woman must have raged and chafed, after the warning of her first illness, over the delay in the marriage ceremony! Don José tried vainly to draw some consolation from the knowledge that, in the end, fate had defeated her.

And the will? The will he had been shown? The lawyer bit his finger-nail and spat on the carpet. He had nothing to do with that. There were plenty of rascals who would forge a will, he pointed out, if it was made worth their while to do it. The will itself might very reasonably be the work of the rascal of Zaragoza, who had been ingenious enough, on the strength of a course of law he had at some time studied, to impose himself on Gomez as a lawyer from Madrid! That stung Don José; he could not forgive Gomez for having allowed himself to be duped as well.

The marriage with Pepe could not take place. That was a plain certainty. No matador could afford to marry a penniless wife, and Pepe himself would leap at the opportunity of breaking a savourless contract in the circumstances. With one half of his mind, Don José was already passing in review the names of other girls of fortune who might be induced to assume the responsibility of Bailarinito's future; with the other half, he made, in his perplexity, the noblest and purest decision of his life. It was completely noble, because in that moment his personal feelings towards Pilár were forgotten: he saw her simply as the victim of his own and Pepe's ambition, and, mercenary as he



was, the impulse to succour one utterly helpless overthrew his baser instincts. He raised Pilár from the ground, and, laying his lips to her hair, muttered:

'You shall always have a home with me, in my house. You shall be my daughter—in spite of everything,' he ended, confusedly. What more was there to say? The girl had not a duro of her own; she was alone in a crumbling house which would not fetch the price of its own bricks and mortar in the present-day market. A wholly impossible situation; and meanwhile, Don José reminded himself, until Pepe put an end to it, the girl was still his betrothed. She was not to blame for her grandmother's plotting, although, incredibly, she had lent herself to it. This did not appear as unreasonable to Don José as it would do to Pepe, for he had a better understanding of the helplessness of Pilár's situation, and, like most of his generation, he accepted the fact that what a woman cannot get by fair means she must by guile. The breaking of a betrothal was a serious matter, regarded lightly neither by Church nor laity. She must remain in the charge of the man who was to have been her father-in-law until she found a husband.

When he had recovered some of his mental balance, Don José talked the matter over with Don Antonio; they did not sit in the patio, but in Don José's office, behind locked doors.

'I grant you it will not look well for Pepe to break his betrothal; but look at this: it is no use shutting one's eyes to the fact he does not care for the girl, does not find her *simpática*. If a doorway opens for a man who is in prison, he is a fool if he does not make use of it.'

'That's all very well, my son; but look at it this way—which, let me tell you, is the way Granada will look at it. Pepe has betrothed himself, as he imagines, to a rich woman; he finds out his mistake, and he breaks his promises. That, look at it as you please, makes an ugly picture.'

'Yes, yes, certainly. But turn your picture round; look at it in this way. Here are two young people who make a bad bargain. If the chance is offered them to get out of it, are they not fools

to refuse it? Especially as the keeping of it is not going to make either of them very happy?’

‘That’s one line of argument,’ frowned the priest, who had already talked the matter over with Don Felipe. ‘And what about this young girl who regards her marriage as a commandment from God?’

Don José looked cynical, and spread his hands out in a way that suggested that, in his opinion, God had very little to do with it. Don Antonio, at heart as much of a materialist as Don José, glared at him, and set up a militant humming. The two men eyed each other belligerently, mutually suspicious.

‘It is not an age of miracles,’ snapped Don José.

‘Well then? What is going to happen to Pilár Borrás?’

‘I myself am responsible for Pilár Borrás,’ roared Don José. The priest’s eye glittered with lubricity.

‘And how are you going to manage that, Señor Don José?’ he enquired smoothly. He knew—or thought he knew—his man; figuratively he licked his lips over a fresh opportunity of asserting the Church’s power over one who was becoming a little grandly independent of it.

‘Pilár Borrás is going to reside here.’

‘Pardon me, I did not catch what you were saying.’

‘Don’t play games with me, Señor Don Antonio; you heard me perfectly clearly. Pilár is going to stay, for the present, here, in this house.’ That there might be no mistaking his intentions, Don José smote the wall nearest to him with the flat of his hand.

‘But that is an impossibility,’ said the priest, with deceptive quietness.

‘Impossibility or not,’ said Don José, secure in his own virtue, ‘that is what is going to happen.’

‘She is a young girl, and you—you yourself are not yet an old man.’ The priest’s eyes sent all of his private knowledge, gained through the confessional, into Don José’s. ‘My son, in this you must accept the ruling of the Church. In bringing this maiden under your roof, you will be exposing yourself to tempta-

tion; you will be committing a crime against her maidenhood. You may say that she regards you as a father; *muy bien*. But you are not her father, nor are you going to become so. You are *muy hombre*, and all women, however innocent, are the same. It cannot be long before she discovers that you are a man.'

'Pilar is still betrothed to Pepe: do you suggest I am likely to cuckold my own son?' roared Don José. The priest's eyebrows were raised, his shoulders as well, and an expression of the utmost worldliness took possession of his face.

'Do not try to avoid the point, my son. All women are alike. You are a man, and she is a woman; it does not matter which of you spins the dice. The first time that your eyes light on Pilar Borrás to recognize that she is a woman, you will have betrayed her virginity and sinned against Holy Church.'

'There are other things beside the flesh,' asserted Don José stiffly. 'I am no longer a *mozo*, I am *caballero*. Always, and in all circumstances, I am *caballero*! You know too much, father—and not enough. I am not, perhaps, a spiritual man, but I do not live altogether like an animal. I do not believe in miracles, but I believe that they may happen to others. And I am supremely capable of managing my own affairs. I choose to bring an angel to my house; that is my business. You hear what I say? An angel. That should answer your objections.' He paused to scowl at Don Antonio, who looked detestably cynical. 'And if that is not enough for you, father, let me show you something.'

He rose stiffly, unlocked the door, and, to the priest's astonishment, beckoned Don Antonio to follow him upstairs.

As usual, Felipa sat upon the gallery following her meek occupation of household mending; she rose, and curtsied humbly to the two gentlemen. When Don José asked her something in a low voice, the priest eyed her furtively. He had never made up his mind about Felipa, and her position in the ex-matador's household. It roused a feeling of irritation in him that there were things which he had never succeeded in forcing out of Don José, for all his authority.

'Follow me here, father,' said Don José, aloud, leading the priest round the gallery to an extremity from which a narrow passage ran off towards the servants' quarters.

Don José paused at the first door in the passage, and flung it open. The room that stood revealed was simple, almost, as a nun's cell; scrupulously clean, with walls of pale chalky blue, and a narrow hard bed, over which hung a wooden crucifix with a slip of palm looped into it. It had no other furniture save an ancient cupboard and a rush-seated chair of scarlet woodwork. Don José made no comment as he crossed this pristine chamber to a door in the opposite wall, in which he turned a key.

During his prosperous years Don José had spent considerable sums upon the furnishing of his house. He had no eye for the antique; the furniture which Doña Laura inherited together with the old house seemed to him shabby, inelegant, and unbecoming his own pomp and glory. He had therefore imported quantities of stuff from Madrid: gilt and brocaded monstrosities, barbarisms in china and glass, all expensive and all hideous, which Doña Laura, herself without much sensitiveness, had been pleased to concentrate in the rooms of entertainment which, since her death, had been closed.

The room into which Don Antonio was now permitted to look was almost entirely draped in hangings of a violent-patterned brocelaine, with a groundwork of chrome yellow, looped and fringed with crude green woolwork. Against this stupendous background were arranged the heavy pieces of a suite in bird's-eye maple, enriched with gilding and mirrors. The floor, so much of it as was visible, was covered with rugs from Turkey and Morocco, but the greater part of the room was filled with the enormous tester bed, draped with hangings of a different colour and design from those of the walls and windows: a staring magenta satin padded the head-panels, and the bolsters and pillows were covered with imitation lace over similar material. Every available inch of space was crowded with small tables, cabinets, and desks, so that it was impossible to go direct to any part of the room. Don José's attitude plainly revealed that he

considered it, and expected others to consider it, the *ne plus ultra* of elegance.

'This was the furniture of my wife's bedroom. I have had it moved during the last week.'

'Very handsome,' commented Don Antonio, believing what he said. 'A very fine apartment,' he added, to fill the uneasy silence, during which he felt the eye of Don José upon him. The latter grunted and, presently, led the way back across the outer room. At the door he paused, facing his companion squarely.

'The only entrance to that room is by the door which you see,' he said slowly and pointedly. 'This room is occupied by my housekeeper, Felipa Vargas. It is she who will have charge of my daughter's virginity.'

This was a facer for Don Antonio. Like other people, he had his ideas about Felipa. His suspicion showed plainly in his eyes; Don José returned the look with a face of stone, and left the room.

As they descended to Don José's study, the priest was forced to admit himself baffled. Believing Don José to be capable of abysmal hypocrisies, he yet could not bring himself to believe him capable of the cynicism of setting an ex-mistress to watch over a prospective one. He knew Felipa Vargas for a quiet, highly respectable woman; it was not for a moment to be credited that she would connive at any dubious conduct on the part of her employer with a young girl taking refuge beneath his roof. Very good, on the face of it—and so long as the situation held. But how long was it liable to hold? There was nothing in Don José's past that showed him to be given to respect for women, and his generousities, as Don Antonio knew, were limited to public occasions, when a display of extravagance might heighten his own prestige. There was something altogether too quixotic about this present scheme.

But having once more ensured their privacy with lock and key, Don José turned uncompromisingly to his companion.

'You see, my mind is fully made up. Neither you nor any other person has the right to intervene between me and my con-

science. And let me remind you of the times you have yourself said that conscience is a man's first judge.'

Don Antonio bit his lips. It was not at all agreeable to have his dogmas thrust back in his face, and he had a suspicion that, beneath the mask of imperturbability, Don José's soul was grinning at him. Don José was certainly showing him in the plainest possible fashion that he was no longer an irresponsible creature, to be terrorized into obeying his confessor against his personal convictions.

Don Antonio cleared his throat and changed his ground.

'And what about Juan?'

'Eh?' said Don José glassily.

'It is an odd household to introduce a young girl into! No woman to take charge—to chaperon—to advise her——!'

'Felipa will look after those things. I think you have nothing to say against Felipa Vargas?' Don José's manner showed that Don Antonio had better not have anything to say. 'If she had married Pepe, Pilár Borrás would have come here as mistress of the house, and Juan would have accepted her as a sister. Apart from the marriage, the position is just the same.'

'The fact that there isn't any marriage makes all the difference in the world,' retorted Don Antonio. 'If you cannot see that! If Juan falls in love with her——'

The face of Don José became suddenly appalling. The thin olive skin was suffused with purple, his nostrils widened, the edges of his upper and lower teeth showed between his slit lips, and his eyes seemed as though they would leap out of his head and strike, like burning coals, into the priest's. He made a noise in his throat, similar to that which a man makes when he is going to have an apoplectic fit, and Don Antonio hastily stretched out his hand, saying in a placable voice,

'Now, my son, do not take this so violently——'

But Don José thrust both the hand and the words aside. He mastered himself with a supreme effort, and showed Don Antonio with an imperious gesture that neither his help nor his advice was required further.

‘There is no more to be said, father. Except that the first time that you see things are not as they should be, you may speak of it to me.’

Don Antonio departed in a dudgeon; he was not accustomed to such dismissals from his spiritual charges, and, but for his cloth, he might have cursed Don José for an upstart.

Juan sauntered into the patio, smiling to himself at a pretty thing he had just seen in the cathedral: two small girls sharing one mantilla, who had passed momentarily in front of him, gathering him into the sombreness of their soft dark eyes. With their frail childish bodies and delicate air they reminded him of gazelles—gazelles come down to drink at the celestial waters. He thought of making a Granadina about them: the first line shaped itself in his mind—‘*Niñas de la Cathedral*’ . . . Things of that kind made it worth while still going into the cathedral; they helped one to forget the general sense of futility which latterly had bedimmed his religious observances. They diverted one’s mind from the hard and doll-like impression made on one nowadays by the images which had once held so strong a mystic significance for one. One could quite conveniently write verse in the cathedral, so long as one did not draw the attention of the priests too closely to one. The blatant and materialistic aspect of his surroundings, whose first perception had horrified Juan, now seemed slightly tinged with the absurd. The priests, moving heavily, with their air of possession, about the building, jerking their heads to turn a worshipper out of a chapel which, for their own convenience, was about to be closed; the choristers in undress, their dirty surplices flung aside, rushing about in alpargatas to perform their officious duties of switching off lights; the cathedral guides eyeing one another with malice and jealousy; the old women clutching each others’ necks and scandalizing under cover of their prayers, had begun to reveal themselves to him as elements of an effete and hypocritical imposition whose association with things of the spirit was in itself a blasphemy: which existed in order to hide God, instead of to reveal Him. In

this phase of quickening perception, Juan was ready enough to accept Miguel's condemnation of the Church; not yet so positive about his disposal of God. And he continued to go to the cathedral and to Nuestra Señora de las Angustias because of some æsthetic stimulus which was to be derived from their stillness and beauty; and to attend mass and confession because he was not sufficiently deeply convinced to invite a painful scene with Don Antonio, and, possibly, with his father.

'Juan!' called his father, as he sauntered into the patio.

Don José looked up sharply as Juan crossed the threshold, and experienced that brief flash of pleasure which the handsomeness of his youngest son always brought him. Juan was already slightly taller than his father, and bore himself in a fashion that showed he was not wholly unconscious of his own grace. During the days since his return from Sanpedro many people had forced it upon his attention, and his Andalusian temperament responded, superficially, to such flattery. The youngest son of El Bailarín was getting ready to become a personage in his small world, and it was with a confidence born of his new dignity that he smiled at Don José, and asked point blank:

'Is it about Felipa?'

'Felipa?' Don José looked blank; then frowned. 'Why should it be about Felipa, my son?'

The ready-blush mantled Juan's cheek and robbed him of his fragile poise. For a moment the fear that his father was about to speak again of Malaga made his heart beat painfully; yet something informed him that it was not that.

He had naturally witnessed the removal of the furniture from his mother's room to the room through Felipa's, and had wondered whether his father had decided to put Felipa openly at the head of his household. If it were so, he, Juan, had no objection. Like his brothers—even the irreverent Pepe—he respected and admired Felipa, and recognized how much she contributed to their comfort. Neither to him nor to the others had she ever broken down the walls of her reserve; she was a ministering stranger, familiar to them only in comfortable, material things;



but like his brothers he felt fairly certain, since he grew old enough to consider such matters, that his father knew more of her. Perhaps Don José was even thinking of marrying Felipa. Well . . . Juan did not quite know how he felt about that; but at any rate the idea did not rouse in him any feeling of antipathy.

'I beg your pardon, father,' he said now, stammering a little. 'I thought it might have something to do with the furniture you have had moved from the room next yours——'

'Exactly! That is what it is,' said Don José eagerly, as though it pleased him that Juan should show this degree of perspicacity. 'Sit down. There are things I have not thought it necessary to tell you—about Pepe's betrothal to Pilár. When that took place, we all believed that Doña Mercedes—may she rest in peace—was a very rich woman, and meant to make her grand-daughter her heiress.'

'And didn't she?' asked Juan, a trifle too carelessly. Of course he knew that Pilár was supposed to be an heiress, and had shrewdly guessed, knowing his brother, that this was a prime cause in Pepe's wooing of her.

'She was a fork-tongued old deceiver—God forgive me, and save her soul from hell!' exploded Don José. 'She has left not one duro—not a centimo—to her grand-daughter; nothing in the world—save a household of old rubbish.'

'What has Balarinito to say to that?' Juan tapped the ash from his cigarette with his little finger; the casual adult action drew upon him for a moment the loving and admiring glance of his father's eyes. This look of affectionate pride was immediately clouded by another, in which there was something doubtful, anxious and difficult to define.

'I have not had a letter from him,' said Don José shortly. 'You understand? It alters many things. In his position Pepe cannot afford to marry a girl without a dowry.'

'Claro,' agreed Juan absently.

'It is bad fortune for the girl,' went on Don José. 'She is young, she is good, she is pure; but life is bad without money. Even at the Carmen de los Arrayanes one cannot live on nothing.'

'Then what is to be done?' asked Juan, raising his large lucid eyes to his father's.

Don José made a magnificent gesture.

'I have made my decision. The matter will be arranged. The girl is as beautiful as a pearl, and she is bound to find a husband soon. Let a man like Alonso Quintero see her, and he will empty his heart at her feet. And until she is married she will live with us.'

Juan looked startled, as well he might. A sense of sweet peril prickled in his veins.

'Here—in the Casa del Matador?'

'Yes. You do not find that extraordinary?' asked Don José suspiciously.

Juan was exceedingly taken aback. With all his love for his father, he knew that it was unlike him to perform, out of pure altruism, an act on so large a scale of generosity.

'No, no. It is a noble thought on your part, father. How strange it will be to have a woman in the house! I mean, as well as Felipa.'

'You are old enough for me to talk to you seriously,' said Don José, in a stern voice. 'There is to be no nonsense, no impropriety. Remember what I say to you; you are to regard Pilár as your sister, and to behave in all ways as though you have been brought up together. You are growing up, but you are still a boy; and it is absolutely necessary for her that she shall make a good marriage.'

'Yes, of course, father.' In these words Don José had revealed to Juan that he was not thinking of sending him immediately to Malaga, and the latter could hardly contain his radiance as he enquired, 'And when is she coming?'

'She is coming to-night,' said Don José. 'She will eat with us. And be careful. Nothing has yet been said to her about the termination of her betrothal; that must be left for Pepe, when he returns.'

'She still thinks she is Bailarinito's novia?' said Juan, startled.

'Of course. That is a matter that cannot be interfered with for the present, until we have word from Pepe.'

Pilár arrived at dusk, in a taxi, with a single ancient trunk with a curved lid and iron strappings, which contained her bridal linen and her few personal possessions. Chita and Isabella had insisted upon driving down with her; they insisted also upon keeping up a low, mournful wailing in the vestibulo, until Don José ordered Felipa to get rid of them.

'They want to know if they can work for your honour,' said Felipa, returning.

'No! A thousand noes! *Madre de Dios*, because I have two women, have I to have a houseful of them?' snapped Don José, in an undertone that escaped Pilár's ears. It did not occur to him to ask the girl if she would care to have one of these people, with whom she was familiar, to keep her company in her new life.

She sat in the *salon*, which had been scarcely ever used since the death of Doña Laura: draped in her black, like a mourning madonna, she gazed half stupefied at photographs of the boys as babies, at a huge coloured enlargement of a photograph of Don José in his fighting clothes, at bulls' ears under glass and made into paper-weights, at a huge ebony pianoforte which had not been tuned for twenty years, since Doña Laura herself had not been a musician and had not touched it from the day of her marriage. The furniture was upholstered in crimson velvet, there were many cushions of Moorish design, antimacassars of lace and embroidered footstools, gigantic vases of burnished copper. The room had the close, suffocating smell of places that have been shut up for a long time; in honour of Pilár's coming, Felipa had seen that all was penetratingly clean. The tasteless magnificence of her surroundings helped to stupefy Pilár; her gloved hands clung, beneath her veil of thin, black silk, to the crucifix she carried; her lips moved, she knew an irrational fear.

Don José, entering the room, found her still as an image; a hitherto unknown happiness flowed over him on finding her there.

'That you may always be happy under this roof,' he said, tenderly taking her hand in his. She dropped her head suddenly, laying her cheek to the back of his hand. In that moment she

visualized a new future for herself; in living with Don José, in learning to perform domestic tasks for him, and in their curious intimacy lay the supreme compensation for her marriage to Pepe. God was good to her—how very good!

'You are altogether noble and honourable,' she breathed; his heart quickened at her almost inaudible words. 'Does it mean that you have quite forgiven me? Because, though I were forgiven by all the saints of heaven and by Our Blessed Lady herself, it would not be enough unless you had forgiven me.'

'We both have much to forgive,' said Don José solemnly. 'You as much as I. I should not have let you be betrothed to Pepe.'

'You but carried out God's will,' said Pilár simply.

Don José wondered whether God ever changed His mind, and, if so, whether Pilár would accept the change with the fatalism with which she had accepted her betrothal. He asked cautiously, 'Have you had word from Pepe?'

'Not one word.' The answer sounded like a question.

'He has much to think about,' said Don José hastily. 'You know this is the busiest time of the season; when he is not fighting he is travelling. The news may not even have reached him, for you know how unreliable the posts are, and hotel-keepers are very bad about forwarding letters.'

'Yes, I know,' she answered indifferently, and her tone told him that she found nothing to distress her in Pepe's silence. He wished, angrily, that it was all over, settled, cleared up. He wished he could take the matter into his own hands, and immediately put an end to the girl's illusion that she was still betrothed to Pepe. But El Balarín, who was all valour with a bull, was wholly lacking in the courage to say to this girl in effect, 'Your betrothal to my son is over, because you have no money.' Had he known Pilár's own feelings on the subject, he might have plucked up heart to do it.

She was still holding his hand, smiling up at him trustfully. 'You must not let me be a burden on your house,' she was saying. 'I can do some things, although I expect at first I shall have to

be reminded, for I am very forgetful. I can sew and I can dust a room, and I think I could cook a little——’

Don José, epicure and gourmet, spoiled for many years by Felipa’s culinary skill, could not restrain a smile at the last earnest, though doubtful, admission; hearing a footstep, he drew his hand quickly from hers.

Juan entered the room: Juan, with grace in all his movements, a painting come to life. For the first time his son’s beauty cost Don José a pang that was not one of pleasure; he had a second of sick foreboding, such as he had known sometimes when going into the bull-ring when the omens were not propitious. The delicate and imaginative temperament of Juan, which his father felt without understanding, seemed to forge a link between him and Pilár which threatened Don José’s peace of mind. His tone was sharper than usual, as he said, ‘Here is your brother Juan, who has come to add his greetings to mine.’ In his own ears his voice sounded stiff and insincere, but no one save himself appeared to observe it. Pilár’s direct silver gaze rested on Juan, without apparent emotion, as she held out her hand with a calm, ‘I am glad to meet my brother Juan.’

Juan stood stock still. The fatal thing had happened. In the instant of their meeting, he had fallen in love with Pilár Borrás. His throat thickened, he was totally incapable of speaking, as he took her hand and bowed over it, so low that his forehead nearly touched the back of Pilár’s black glove. He bowed so low for two reasons; one was to show her respect, but the other and more overwhelming one was to hide his face from her, and from his father, for he could feel self-betrayal in every line of it.

The slim figure, draped in its funeral black, embodied for him at a single glance all the unattainable whose intimations had plagued him for many months in his dreams. When he could trust himself to look at her again, he took in, beneath the long fringes of his eyelids, every detail of that beauty which so far he had only casually beheld from a distance. He loved her pale oval face, and the silken veil that swept lightly in symmetrical folds from the crown of her head to her shoulders, continuing

thence its shadowy darkness to the hem of her gown. The lines of her body communicated poetry to the dark material—a poetry which fired him with the immediate desire to translate it into words. And that cool, pure hand, gloved in black silk, that Bailarinito was mad enough to relinquish because it contained nothing but itself! He wanted to take it and curve it round his lips, so that he could fill it with kisses. Could he have followed his untrammelled impulse, he would have flung himself at her feet, to kiss the hem of her gown; for all the extravagance of young love, of love at first sight, burned beneath his careful quietness, which, even so, he fancied he felt his father regarding with suspicion.

And presently, on Pilár's lips there broke a shy, almost childish shy, smile. How beautiful he is! she was thinking. He is just like a little apostle! A little San Juan!

'Juan!' Don José's voice broke harshly into their silence, which, to all three of them, seemed very long. 'Go and find Felipa; send her to this room.'

When they were alone Don José spoke to Pilár passionately.

'This house and all that is in it are yours. Whatever you wish, you have only to say it. There is nothing I will not do to make you content. If you wish to alter things, you have only to speak to me or to Felipa. All is to be as you like it, and for you alone. I am wholly at your service. Not only now, but always.' His voice was trembling, and, in order to disguise his deep emotion, he walked to a table and picked up a photograph of Bailarinito, which stood there in a silver-gilt frame; it was the first thing that came to his hand, and he stared at the stiff unnatural photograph of a small boy in a stiff collar as though he were seeing it for the first time, until Felipa came into the room.

'Your honour wanted something?'

'There is the señorita; look after her,' he commanded roughly, and went out, leaving the two women together.

During supper it occurred to Juan that he had never heard his father address Felipa so curtly, with so little consideration. Nothing could exceed her meekness and humility as she took in

silence Don José's captious condemnation of a dish which, he declared, was not to his liking. Not saying a word, she removed the dish and went quietly from the room: returning a few minutes later with Don José's favourite tortilla, which she placed before him. He did not even thank her for it. Beyond his criticisms he contributed little to the conversation; he seemed irritated by something for, when he had eaten his tortilla, he rose from the table and immediately afterwards left the house.

The fact of being alone with Pilár—save for Felipa, who brought her knitting, and sat down in the corner of the room like a watchful shadow—tongue-tied Juan. He was under the spell of Pilár's silver eyes; he was learning, as a child learns a lesson, every movement of her thin, quietly moving hands. At last, despairingly, he leaned upon the table and said stammeringly:

'Señorita Pilár—do—do you know that—once—I sang for you?'

'For me?' she said, seriously.

Juan was too young, and took himself too seriously, to tell her the history of the ludicrous climax of his serenade, but he nodded his head emphatically.

'Yes; one evening—up on the terrace, near your mirador. It was a solea—rather a beautiful one, but very sad! It is a strange thing, is it not, that the saddest things are the most beautiful, as a rule? But as the words are not true—of us—any longer, I will sing it, and you can judge for yourself.'

Juan lifted up his voice, and Felipa's dark, music-loving eye lightened across the room.

*'Te veo y no te puedo hablar.*

*Mira que triste nuestra suerte es que*

*To veo y no te puedo hablar!'*

Pilár sat smiling a little timidly, with her hands in her lap; how earnestly and beautifully he sang—as though he were a chorister! Across the room darkness grew in Felipa's eyes.

## Fifteen

THEY WERE like brother and sister together. Pilár's innocence was so complete, her lack of amorous propensity so sincere, that the more passionate Juan found himself accepting the limitations her total unawareness imposed upon their relationship. The fact that they were hardly ever alone also helped him to keep his feelings towards her within the bounds his father would have approved, while it undoubtedly inflamed and added to his love for her. Often they went up to Juan's favourite haunts of the Alhambra—although never to the place where Juan had had his 'accident'—always accompanied by Felipa, holding each other's hands like children as they wandered through the patios, while Juan proudly displayed to her his knowledge of Alhambra history. They had told each other that they loved each other, but the nearest Juan had come to telling her he was in love with her—a distinction Pilár was not likely to have grasped—was in his poems, which he sent her secretly, on bits of thin paper twisted round the stems of roses, or in a bag of sugared almonds. These she loved, and found them lovely, and Juan wonderful for being able to write them.

Slowly, thanks to this companionship, Pilár was becoming more normal in her mind and manner; and perhaps also the illness of old Don Felipe, the fact that she did not see him, as formerly, every day of her life, helped her to adjust herself to conditions less abnormal than those prevailing at the Carmen de los Arrayánes.

She had accepted her new lodging with the same fatalism as she had accepted the few experiences of her life up to the death



of Doña Mercédes. It seemed to her wholly natural that Don José should assume the disposition of her future, now that she had no one else to look after her. As water flowed, so her life flowed on; and presently, she believed, would come the day when the will of God was fulfilled and she was married to Pepe Díaz. As no one suggested anything to the contrary, it did not at first occur to her that there was any doubt of her marriage taking place. Don José's forgiveness of her enforced duplicity seemed to her proof that all was unaltered. She was calm, almost torpid, in her acceptance of the situation.

A strange friendship had developed between Pilár and Felipa. Pilár, who had never known the companionship of any woman near her own age since the death of Maria save that of Isabella, a damsel too far removed from her by temperament to be regarded as an intimate, clung from the first to Felipa, who allowed it to be seen in every word and action that she regarded Pilár as a being almost supernatural: waiting on her hand and foot as though she were an Infanta; enslaving herself so that, had Pilár required her to cut off her hand in her service, she would meekly have done so. It was Felipa who gradually rearranged her own chamber as a sitting-room for Pilár, introducing from time to time a chair, a table, or a cabinet from other parts of the house. Here the girl had a retreat, when she desired, from the rest of the household, and here, often, the two women sat together, talking familiarly over their needlework, or, sometimes, with empty hands.

But as the days went on, and no word came from Pepe; as it became increasingly evident that Don José was avoiding the name of Pepe in his conversations; and as Juan's devotion, which he carefully kept from his father, impressed itself more and more upon her attention, Pilár began to be uncertain. Her faith trembled a little; and, as the word did not come that would have set her mind at rest, she began, for the first time, to visualize the possibility of not being married to Pepe.

The thought opened up such vistas of relief in her mind that she was horrified; she dared not entertain it. It was surely sinful

to draw back from a thing ordained by heaven. Things were so happy and pleasant as they were: could it be wicked to wish them to go on in that way for ever? Perhaps in being so happy, in spending so much time in the Alhambra and with Felipa, she had been neglecting her spiritual duties. The reflection drove her to her prayers. She prayed desperately that her time of uncertainty might be shortened, that Pepe might return and their marriage be accomplished. But it was difficult—more difficult than anything she had ever attempted in her life—to pray with sincerity for a thing so little desired. And one day, as she knelt before the Virgin, a fearful thing happened: the face of Pepe came between her and the holy figure—the *roué* face of Pepe, with its bad smile. It made her cry out aloud, as though the Devil had appeared to her. And one day she knew that her prayers were no longer of any use to her; she was no sooner on her knees than she saw Pepe, and Pepe only. It was of no use praying any more.

The removal of this foundation of her life left her nervous, sick, and feverish at night, when she tossed about on Doña Laura's feather mattress. She had no spiritual influence during her days with which to counteract its loss. The atmosphere of the Casa del Matador was wholly secular and materialistic; the support of Don Felipe was denied her; and from Don Antonio she was unable to get even a glimmering of the light for which she craved. The thought of marriage with Pepe had become stronger than the thought of God. Her power to insulate her physical from her spiritual self was gone, and she became horrifically conscious of the physical aspect of her coming marriage. A thought to which her prayers had helped her to blind herself forced its way relentlessly to the surface. She hated, dreaded, and feared Pepe Díaz, and how could she, whose body shrank from the very thought of contact with his, fulfil the will of God by bringing purification to a husband she loathed?

'Father, haven't you had a letter from Bailarinito?' Juan was constrained to ask one day, when Don José sat at his desk engaged in the distasteful task of writing a letter. He wrote with

difficulty, pulling faces over the business. A great paraphernalia of writing surrounded him: a gold inkstand in the shape of a bull's head, presented by an admirer; a great writing-pad of embossed Cordoban leather, which bore his monogram in gold upon the cover; a pen with a gold handle and an execrable nib.

Don José was engaged, as were most of the property-owners in Granada in these days of the Republic, in fighting against impuestos; the new Government had done nothing to endear itself to the middle classes by the instantaneous levy of exorbitant taxes. Don José, struggling with official forms, was in a villainous temper.

On his desk, in a box of silver filigree brought from Cordoba, lay the coleta which had been cut off after his last fight in Madrid. Juan now irritated his father by lifting the lid of the box and fingering the coleta—a purely nervous movement—as he asked Don José the question; but the latter whitened with rage.

'Keep your hands off that!—No, I have not heard,' roared Don José, flinging a blot of ink on the paper, and gaping at it with the speechless, wholly disproportionate anger of a man brought to his last extremity by a trifle. Had Juan been alive to anything but his own troubles, he would surely have found something sinister in Don José's lack of control, for he was old enough to realize how much of his father's pride lay in his preservation of an imperturbable demeanour. Don José must either be very sick or very worried.

'It is time he answered your letter,' persisted Juan, too full of his own affairs to accept a warning.

'He is making up his mind. He cannot be expected to make up his mind in five minutes.'

'Do you mean he may marry Pilár after all?'

'*Madre de Dios*, how can I tell what Pepe is likely to do?' shouted Don José. 'He has enough to occupy his mind at present. It is no concern of yours, in any case.'

'It concerns Pilár,' said Juan, white-lipped, as he looked full at his father. His eyes fell before the ghastly countenance Don José lifted from his papers.

'That is what I say. It has nothing to do with you.'

'But, father—cannot you order Balarinito——?' stammered Juan, lost to prudence, hardly knowing what he meant to say.

The ex-matador's face suffused itself with the livid purple which had alarmed Don Antonio on another occasion. He fixed Juan with his eye in a manner that made the latter step back sharply from the desk. Juan was, for the first time, physically afraid of his father. It is impossible to say what further might have passed between them if into Don José's office, with the freedom of the privileged friend, had not entered at that inauspicious moment the confident and genial figure of Don Alonso Quintero, hat on side, cigar in hand, blandly unconscious of all save himself and the immense gratification his presence must bring to any company he chose to honour. He clapped Juan on the shoulder and extended a warmly cordial hand to Don José.

Don José choked and struggled with a variety of feelings. Don Alonso was certainly his friend, and, as such, he was conventionally glad to see him. At the same time he had on his mind this business of the impuestos: he had the irritation of his recent conversation with Juan; he had all the business of Pepe and Pilár; he had his own private thoughts about Pilár; he had more than a suspicion that Juan was falling in love with Pilár; he had his continuous nagging anxiety about Pepe's career—an agglomeration of matter sufficient to drive any man crazy. And now the arrival of Don Alonso put the coping-stone upon his secret torment.

He knew exactly what he feared as he looked up slyly at his friend. Don Alonso was a man of middle age, thickening in figure, short, and clean-shaven; with that fatal and irresistible something about his personality not to be gainsaid by either sex. Where Don José was morose, Don Alonso was gay; where the former was close-fisted, the latter was open-handed; where the one was respected, the other was adored. Don Alonso's married state had placed no embargo upon his indulgence of many loves, and since he had been, for the last three years, a widower like Don José, it was generally believed he was on the look-out for another wife.

A piercing anxiety shot its shaft into Don José's heart. He

thought he knew exactly what had brought Don Alonso to the casa. It had been easy enough to speak of such a contingency to Juan; it was another matter when the thing thrust itself under one's nose in this unmistakable fashion. And although he was capable—or thought he was capable—of rejoicing for Pilár's sake if she betrothed herself to a young fellow of her own generation, he knew he could never support the idea of handing her over to this experienced charmer who was old enough to be her father.

Don Alonso was the only person in Granada who ever took liberties with Don José Díaz Marquez. In doing so he claimed the rights of an old friendship. As a boy he had planted the *banderillas* for El Bailarín; but, having no particular taste for the sport, had abandoned it as lightly as he abandoned all that did not please or amuse him. With one arm thrown carelessly upon Juan's shoulder, he now clapped his friend heartily on the back; his vibrant and confident personality thrust itself through the veils of caution behind which Don José attempted to take shelter.

'Well, my friend, what are you doing here? Where have you been these last ten days? And how is your household going on?'

Don José ducked his head to conceal the fury that leapt to his eyes at this unmistakable reference to Pilár. He replied mumblingly that his affairs were in a bad way, that he was being cheated by all and sundry—and grudgingly offered Don Alonso a chair. His pride was as sore as a boil over the affair of the Carmen de los Arrayánes—he could forgive all save being publicly fooled—and he felt he would either go mad or strike Don Alonso to the ground if he made one single reference to the affairs of the late Doña Mercedes. His feelings being so violent, and so intimately connected with his personal pride, it became incumbent upon him, as usual, to conceal them. He therefore quickly raised his head and directed upon Don Alonso the shallow, falsely agreeable smile that was meant to inform the latter that his terseness was a matter wholly connected with his business worries, and in no way directed upon his visitor: and meanwhile his heart waited, cringing, for the first shaft Don Alonso should see fit to plant in it.

But Don Alonso's tact was no less famous than his geniality. He dedicated a hunched shoulder, a down-drawn lip, and a lifted right hand to the iniquities of the Government, and dismissed such ignoble matters for others more agreeable. Juan, out of modesty, had slipped away, bethinking himself of his Granadina, '*Niñas de la Cathedrale*.' There might possibly be an opportunity of showing it to his idol, who might fancy it enough to sing it!

'Now come, I have a very good suggestion to make to you for this evening,' said Don Alonso, drawing up his trousers and smiling, not at Don José, but at the great head of the Muira bull which was mounted over his desk. 'That was a noble beast, José! We shall not forget that day.—There is a tertulia out at Aguadero; Raimundo is saying farewell to all his friends, because he is going to take over the family estates at Jerez de Marquesada. You know Raimundo is a notable aficionado, and who knows whether he may not be able to do something for Pepe one of these days, if he feels that way?' It was the nearest Don Alonso came to hinting that Bailarinito's affairs were not so rosy as they should have been: and even from this most delicate and kindly reminder Don José twisted away as though a dart had been stuck into his shoulder.

'You ought to have a look at that property,' went on Don Alonso. 'It will shortly be coming into the market. Fifty kilometres of vineyard nicely matured, and a fine house in the best of condition—something you don't find every day within a couple of kilometres of Granada.'

'*Madre de Dios!* Do you expect me to buy property when already we are taxed out of existence?'

'Exactly! That is why. Taxation is not so severe out in the country, and the vines would bring you in a good little income. Think it over. You will thank me for it if you take your chance before the news goes round.'

Don José had not the least wish or intention of buying a country property; he also remembered Don Alonso's interest in real estate, and his former attempts to induce him to buy a flat

in Mesones. To buy Aguadero would mean to sell the Casa del Matador, and, owing to its position, the latter was hardly worth the ground it stood on. All that Manigua property was bound to be pulled down sooner or later, or would tumble to bits of its own accord. He was therefore on the point of declining flatly to give it another thought when it occurred to him that at this hour—five, or thereabouts—Pilár and Felipa were wont to set out for the cathedral. Now and again, on her way across the patio, Pilár would stop, tap at his door, and come in. The fact that she did not do it regularly filled the minutes round about this hour with agreeable apprehension for Don José: would she, or would she not? The infernal certitude that she would on this afternoon choose to pay him a visit made him overwhelmingly anxious to get Don Alonso out of the way. He therefore said that he would come to the tertulia, and by clever flattery he made it appear that his dismissal of Don Alonso was forced upon him by the tragic necessity of getting his accounts in order before appearing to make his appeal on the following morning at the Ayuntamiento.

But, just as he had succeeded in manœuvring Don Alonso to his feet, the sound he dreaded came upon the panel of the door. Pilár stood there in her black toquilla, with her prayer-book and her black fan clasped in her gloved hand.

The agony of Don José can hardly be described as this defeat of his hopes took place. He had no course save to present her to Don Alonso, which he did with a grave and warning emphasis as 'my daughter.' Out of the corner of his eye he watched the encounter; saw Don Alonso—that past master of *el piropo*—pressing the hand of Pilár—holding it—too long—too long—Something cracked in Don José's head. In an unrecognizable voice he ordered her to church; saw through a crimson mist the look of innocence and obedience she cast at him; realized—too late—the fatal fact that Don Alonso had offered himself as escort to the two women: choked back a cry of protest—and found himself alone. His *soul* was alone, screaming with fright in the darkness. He had the illusion of being abandoned to inconceiv-

able dangers. As though his patron saint had turned his back on him.

That night he said to Pilár, watching her face :

‘So you had an escort to the cathedral?—He is a wonderful man; he is the most remarkable man in Granada; there is really no one at all like him.’ To his own horror and amazement, he heard his own lips continuing to pour out these senseless compliments to Don Alonso, while what he yearned to cry was, ‘Have nothing whatever to do with him! He does nothing but betray women! Do not allow yourself to be fascinated!’

The pure and conscious look of Pilár had the effect of driving back these sincerer phrases, and of making him praise the man who had been his friend, and who, in his distorted mind, he suddenly regarded as his enemy.

And when he had left her, and was driving with Don Alonso out into the moonlit country to the tertulia at Aguadero, he was tortured by the fear she might have taken his recommendations in earnest; and tortured by the knowledge that Juan was at home (why could he not have had the forethought to suggest his joining the party? He was now old enough to be accepted in adult society, and there were boys at Aguadero); and ignorant of the fact that during the very moments when the taxi-cab was jolting and racketing over the country road Pilár was weeping into the darkness, beating her hands against the bed-coverings, yet always controlling her grief for fear Felipa should hear on the other side of the door, which was left, always, slightly ajar. She felt like a person, clinging to the edge of a precipice, who feels his hold slipping inch by inch, or like a prisoner waiting for a verdict that may be death or release.

Pepe swept down upon the household at midnight a few days later. He arrived in a Hispano-Suiza car driven by a chauffeur; he was dressed in a light grey suit of superfine cloth, the jacket of which, in deference to the heat, he wore slung across his shoulders like a cape; his shirt was of the thinnest white cambric, with a monogram in scarlet on the left breast. He was



magnificent. He was more than a little drunk. The three young aficionados who accompanied him were also more than a little drunk, and, clearly, totally beneath the spell of the magnificence of Bailarinito.

They came roistering into the patio, making so much noise that Pilár, with a sudden intimation of what it was all about, first rushed barefoot to look from the windows of the gallery, and then flew back to fling herself into the arms of Felipa, where she trembled speechless, knowing that her hour was come. Another also tiptoed to the gallery window: Juan, who stood there in his nightshirt to look down with eyes of cold condemnation upon the brother he had loved.

Bailarinito was clearly too drunk to consider the disturbance his arrival at such an hour would make in the house; commanding his admirers for the present to make themselves scarce, he stood in the middle of the patio and shouted for his father.

Don José stood in the doorway, leaning upon his stick. His look of age, his sick weariness, were not apparent to the dissolute eyes of Bailarinito; but Don José, looking for a hero, saw clearly what Pepe had become: a third-rate matador, in the act of flinging away the noblest career in the world. A flash, and the moment of revelation was past; as though Don José had snatched at the rags of his illusions and bound them across his eyes. In doing so he tacitly accepted the aspect of Bailarinito which represented the latter's thought of himself: a dashing young bull-fighter, highly prosperous, in new clothes, with a diamond ring upon his finger, another diamond pinned carelessly into the loose ends of his tie.

They kissed. A reek of brandy puffed into Don José's face. Bailarinito walked—with remarkable steadiness—to a chair, helped himself to a Havana, jerked one leg across the other, and puffed out a cloud of smoke.

'You understand: it's over.'

Bailarinito was the first to speak; the words shot out of his mouth like bullets aimed at a stranger. Wounded to the quick, Don José spread out his hands and shrugged his shoulders.

'One must be practical,' he conceded.

'I thought you were taking that tale of the fortune too easily,' said Bailarinito disagreeably. Don José had been prepared for this stab, which he had not earned. He had not been the one to take the tale of the fortune easily. It had been Pepe who had driven him into the business by his romantic passion for the girl seen in the cathedral. And if he had been deceived, had not Gomez fallen into the trap as well? He preserved an expression of outward indifference. 'Well, you'll have to get me out of that cactus-thicket,' concluded Bailarinito, when he had indulged in some wounding reflections upon Don José's want of foresight: he was not usually unpleasant with his father, but on this night he had had far too much brandy to drink, and was in a mood to quarrel and to boast. 'And the quicker the better, because there's something else on hand. I told you I'm always lucky at Malaga!'

'You have found another woman,' said Don José expressionlessly. Bailarinito laughed, drew the ring from his finger, and flicked it across the table.

'Four thousand pesetas,' he said, with assumed casualness. 'That's something to get hold of!'

'A foreigner.' Suspicion, born of his own experiences, lent an edge to the voice of Don José as he picked up the ring to examine it with a practised eye. He had received plenty of jewellery from foreign women in his time. 'What's the good of that—except to go on with?' he retorted, when he had satisfied himself of the fact that he had suspected—that Bailarinito was lying to him to the tune of about three thousand pesetas. But it is part of a bull-fighter's business to lie about this kind of thing. Bailarinito should, however, have known better than to try it on with his father. 'You want a wife.'

'That's what I'm going to get.'

'Eh?'

'American.' He puffed the word out on a cloud of smoke. 'Solid gold, from toe-nails to teeth, this one! That's her car outside. I borrowed it to come over in. When we're married,

she's going to give me one of my own. I knew my luck would turn sooner or later. Wait till you see the papers next week! The first thing I did was to buy them all round to my side. She saw the need of that, when I pointed it out to her. They're jumping on Lalanda now, instead of me. They've always got to have someone to jump on!'

'Listen; you're crazy,' said Don José slowly. In the pause that followed he was thinking of the kind of things that are said, among the *afición* and by the bull-fighters themselves, about a matador who goes round with an English or American woman. He had had some of it, and he knew. Bailarinito must have heard the things that were said. He, El Bailarín, had lived it down; but all his prejudice on Pepe's account could not blind him to the fact that Bailarinito was not capable of living it down. And to marry such a one! He must be mad—or he must have been drinking for days. Don José directed a penetrating look upon his son. If Bailarinito was drinking, he was, so far, carrying it well. To-night was nothing to go by; any bull-fighter can have a blind. Pepe did not look bad—not bad at all.

He began to tell Bailarinito the full and circumstantial history of his own dealings with Americans.

'To live on—yes, perhaps; if you can keep them where they belong. But not to live with. . . . Those *gachis*—they don't know what it means to be the wife of a famous man. They must always be in front; they do not understand that it is a woman's business to be satisfied with her home and her children. They want to know everything; they understand nothing. They want to hang themselves round a man's neck like a necklace—to make an exhibition of themselves and him. They make one ridiculous with one's friends. They expect one always to be in the mood, and if one is not—— You would never know any peace in your home; always there would be scenes, there would be trouble.'

'I think I can fix all that,' said Bailarinito cynically. 'After all, it was not I who asked her to marry me. You could have knocked me down with a feather when she suggested it. I wasn't at all keen at the time—I knew what Vilchez and other people would

say. But she made it pretty clear it was the only way I'd get her money, and, hell! I need the money!

'And the first time she finds out you are unfaithful to her—*¡esú!* the money will vanish, and most likely at an inconvenient moment. Tying yourself up with a half-crazed American *gachi!* Let me tell you how it is about them: the first time they meet a matador they go mad; they drink, they drug, they make love—always as if they had a train to catch. On a night when they have had a whiskey-soda too much they beg you to marry them. You say to yourself, It is not a bad girl; she is very pretty; she has plenty of money. You play a little with her, to see how she is—eh? You find out; good. So you say, Yes; and immediately your mind lights up like a theatre, seeing what a fine time you will have. She says, "I love you. I have a million dollars." You think, A million dollars. That is good. I can use a million dollars.' And you go round among your friend throwing your chest out and saying, "I have found a woman with a million dollars." They shake hands with you, they buy you drinks—oh, it is amazing how many friends you will find you have with a million dollars at the back of you! What next? Along comes a father, or a brother, or a cousin. What, our money going into the pockets of a matador? And the next thing you know is the girl is on board a liner for New York, and you are left to pull a face——'

Instinctively Don José had forsaken the measured phrases of his latter-day speech, and had dropped back into the short, dialectical phrases of his professional days.

'You may be right,' said Bailarinito, lighting his second Havana. 'But in this case it is different. She has been married before, and her husband died and left her all he'd got.'

'*Madre de Dios*, how old is she?' spluttered Don José.

'Thirty or forty,' said Bailarinito carelessly. '*Es una mujer muy elegante*; in Malaga she had a first-floor suite at the Caleta Palace; she has a woman to do her hair——'

Bailarinito was so clearly drunk with self-satisfaction—as well as with less subtle wine—that Don José realized he was wasting

his breath. None the less, he spent nearly an hour in trying to convince his son of the fact that in risking such a marriage he was, in the most practical and dangerous fashion, risking his whole career.

The protection of his nerves must always be an important consideration to a bull-fighter, said Don José, seeing, but forbearing to remark upon, the twitching of Bailarinito's fingers, the continual, uneasy shrug of his shoulders—such a movement as a man may make who is conscious of an ill-fitting shirt; and Bailarinito's shirt was far from ill-fitting.

A bull-fighter's wife should be like a bundle of soothing herbs : a pillow of smoothness and softness to which to retire between the crises of his professional and amatory career. What did any foreign woman understand about that?

Perhaps the spirit of Doña Laura rested a little more quietly as it listened to Don José hymning the matrimonial virtues of the Spanish wife. Yet he was not thinking of Doña Laura; rather he was describing, so far as the limits of his imagination would allow him, some faint, far ideal which had shaped itself of latter years, when El Bailarín had time to think. He did not even remember how closely his description fitted Doña Laura, who had indeed possessed all those meek virtues which he now recommended to Bailarinito. No matador could do with anarchy in his household; that was the text of his dissertation, to which Bailarinito listened sulkily, with a slight smile of contempt. His father was talking like an old man, but he, Bailarinito, was on the top of the wave.

Although his nerves were all over the place, he was easier in mind than he had been for many months; all his vanity was appeased by his new conquest. He thought of the diamond on his finger; of the piles of new linen he had ordered on the authority of his future wife; of the magnificent new wardrobe trunk, American style, with which she had presented him; of the obsequiousness displayed by the tradesmen whose long-standing accounts he had at last been able to settle; of the complacency of the Press; of the convenience of having a Hispaño-Suiza at his

disposal; and—a very little—of the woman who was prepared to throw her cap over the windmill on his account.

‘Well, you’ll settle the business with Pilár,’ he ended, rising.

‘You could well do that for yourself. She is in the house at this present moment.’

‘*Qué?*’ said Balarinito, startled.

‘You did not suppose it could be finished just like that? She has nothing. All her relations, except a rascally uncle, are dead. The convents have no home to offer young women without fortune. What is she to do? Perhaps you can suggest something. Or perhaps you think your novia can take a little room and mend clothes or wash them? She has to live. *Pobre di ella*, she has to live!’

‘Eh?’ said Balarinito, even more startled. He made the ineffectual Spanish gesture of resigning all problems to others better equipped to deal with them than himself, but in his heart he was as astonished as Juan had been by this unwonted solicitude on the part of his father. A sly insinuation dawned in the eye he turned sidelong upon Don José, which, fortunately, the latter did not perceive.

‘I dare say you will find she will be glad enough to get out of it herself,’ said Balarinito cunningly.

‘She has at least this roof to shelter her until she finds another for herself.’

Balarinito shrugged his shoulders, laughed.

‘Oh, well, that is all right. I suppose she will get married some day—to someone who does not mind all that talk of angels and visions. It was getting on my nerves, I can tell you! No matter how pretty a girl is, one doesn’t want to hear the Hail, Mary every time she opens her mouth.—Clarissa talks of buying a house in Sevilla.’

‘Is that her name?’ said Don José, dully. ‘Well, are you going to see Pilár?’

‘What would be the good of it? The thing is the same, whoever says it. We do not talk easily together. It will be better for you to do it.’

Don José slept indifferently that night; the unpleasant duty of the morrow chased sleep from his pillow. Like Pepe, he had the lifelong habit of avoiding unpleasant things when possible, particularly when they concerned women. He had lost his trick of brutality.

His mind split itself in twain over rage at Pepe's lack of chivalry and approval of the practical consideration that prompted it. If Pepe had insisted, in the circumstances, upon marrying Pilár, he knew that he himself would have been furious; it would have been an act of crazy quixotry; he might as well retire from the ring at once—or pick up a living as a casual bull-fighter or banderillero at the small ferias—as marry a penniless wife.

But, as night wore towards morning, all other considerations submerged themselves in a growing tide of content, which seemed to have its source in the very depths of his being: that by Pepe's action Pilár became his, to cherish, to protect, and to succour in her strange saint-child relationship to him and his life—a relationship too subtle, too separate from all Don José had ever known, for him to be able to analyse it. Had anyone accused him of being in love with Pilár Borrás, he would have denied it with fury; that he identified her with that corrupt and stunted religion of his was a matter he had not begun even dimly to suspect.

She was alone when he went to her in the morning: she and Felipa had just finished a conversation that had left her grey and sharpened, with eyes sombre with an inexpressible trouble and stained beneath with damp purple patches.

'So you think too that Pepe is perhaps not going to want to marry me?'

'Only God knows that; do you want to marry our Pepe, my little pearl?'

'It is not my place to want or not to want it,' said Pilár plaintively.

'*Madre mia!* It is for every girl to want or not to want a man. And the world is full of men—bad luck for women, Blessed Mary protect them! If it is not our Pepe, it will be another, you may be sure of that.'

'Why did he not speak to me when he came last night? It is God's will I should marry him; if he breaks his word to me he is going against the will of God Himself,' she murmured.

Felipa's answer came slowly.

'It may be it takes more than God's will to make a marriage.'

'How can that be? The will of God is everything,' said Pilár simply. She came and laid her head on Felipa's shoulder. 'Help me. Something has gone wrong. Something has gone wrong with my prayers. They don't seem to get to God. It's like shouting against a wall: the echo comes ringing back at me.'

Anxiously Felipa took the two cold, limp hands and felt them; her roughened finger-tips caressed the soft white neck.

'It may be a sign God expects you to make up your mind without His help.'

'What have I to make up my mind to? I have been told what I am to do. There is nothing to do but to wait. I can't sleep, I can't be still. My heart is always restless, trembling inside my body.'

'Keep quiet and have faith,' counselled Felipa. 'It is all one can do when one has lost the way.'

'And if I do not marry Pepe—what then? I cannot stay here for ever. Good as Don José is, I cannot impose myself upon him and expect him to keep me, as if I was his daughter. What will become of me? Oh, tell me; there must be other women like myself who are left without any money; tell me what they do. Where do they live? And how?'

Felipa's troubled gaze crossed Pilár's head.

'It is hard for me to advise you, little pearl. In my class poverty is different—it is not so terrible. There are plenty of things to be done. The cousin of Angelillo Laguna—she was left a widow when she was nineteen, with two little children; she has found work in a shop. I have heard of girls who become governesses; there is a señorita on the Gran Via who teaches Spanish to foreigners.'

'There are many girls about here,' said Pilár suddenly. 'How do they earn their livings?'



Felipa made a gesture which would have conveyed much to a mind less ignorant than Pilár's.

'It is a bad neighbourhood,' she said vaguely. 'They are bad girls—the girls of La Manigua.'

The name called up in Pilár's mind an echo of conversations with Maria; she pressed her hand to her forehead.

'It is here girls sell themselves—to men? Yes? They get money for doing that?'

A look of illimitable maternal pain crossed the features of Felipa as she read what passed in the girl's mind: the fantastic conjecturings of a mind poorly adjusted to the commonplaces of life. Murmuring something, she quickly signed the cross on Pilár's brow, lips, and breast; as she did so Don José came to the door. She drew meekly aside, and with her customary token of humility left them together.

Facing Pilár, Don José began to tremble. He was about to inflict an injury upon her; he was about to crucify Pilár as he himself had been crucified, and he had the dread of one who knowingly commits a sin against innocence and helplessness.

The look on his face reminded her of the strange day when he had come to her upon the terrace: when she had felt the dark and bitter tide of his unspoken sorrow flowing into her so that she became heavy with it. She thought of all his goodness and forbearance, and, conscious that he was again in trouble, felt the desire to offer herself once more as the channel of his deliverance from whatever obscure misery oppressed him. She waited for him to speak; then, as he continued silent, she drew near to him, and, kneeling at his side, she lifted his hand and held it against her brow.

The words, the equivocal, concealing words in which he had planned to convey Pepe's desertion to her, were blown like dust from his lips. He made a grotesque sound, and at the same time dragged her to her feet. They stood facing each other, almost bosom to bosom. His eyes started, rolled in their sockets. He said, in an unnaturally loud voice:

'Your betrothal to Pepe is at an end.'

The words made a reverberation in Pilár's ears; instinctively she put up her hands to shield them. Their eyes met, and, before either realized it, truth was born between them. Don José's soul rejected the illusion which had confused his vision of Pilár.

She, on her part, knew the emotion of a bird uncaged. The complicated and uncertain motives which had governed her attitude to her approaching marriage resolved themselves in a blinding flash of relief that split to its kernel the frail mystical husk which had concealed, even from herself, the girl's true nature. The power to love was born in her: whom or what mattered little to Pilár in that revelatory moment. She thought no more of her future: her soul unseparated itself and reached with a singing joy towards the source of her deliverance. Even from Don José, that man of blindness and sorrow, her gladness could not be hid.

## Sixteen

**J**UAN HAD made a wreath of plumbago, and placed it on Pilár's head; from beneath the frail blue crown her eyes smiled at him with the solemn happiness of a child. 'Now you are Nuestra Señora de las Flores!' he cried. She nodded; she enjoyed, as a child might have enjoyed them, the innocent games Juan played with her; the childhood, of which fate had cheated her, reached its late floescence in her association with her 'brother' Juan. Thanks to Juan and Felipa, she was now discovering all the pleasant experiences which had so far been denied to her: days when they took food in a basket and went out into the country, evening strolls in the crowded streets, where the street-lamps met strangely the last orange blaze of the setting sun. With Juan on one side and Felipa on the other she listened to the sellers of songs upon the pavement, and now and then Juan would buy a pink or green sheet, for the pleasure of comparing his own compositions with these manufactures of doggerel.

One evening they had the especial thrill of seeing a man on thirty-foot stilts advertising somebody's tailoring; at the sight of the grotesque tottering figure with its head level with the tree-tops, Pilár laughed and clapped her hands like a child of ten.

On a Sunday afternoon, by Juan's especial persuasion, Don José took them to see the gipsies. Pilár sat thunderstruck at the edge of a swirling sea of flounces, but shrank away in fear when La Jardín wanted to tell her fortune. The experience was too garish, too exotic for her to support at that stage of her

development. Juan, vibrating with the colour and romance of the spectacle, was a little disappointed by Pilár's reaction; Don José, who had seen the dancing under other conditions, sat looking respectable and feeling bored. On his left, by apparent accident, sat the gipsy woman who had been his mistress; one would have taken them for strangers.

One incident lightened, for Juan, the rather unsuccessful expedition. As they were leaving the cave his sleeve was caught by the lovely daughter of La Jardín and he was dragged back for a moment, a centre of dark eyes and vivid faces.

'Have you seen Miguel?' he was asked.

'Why—no!' stammered Juan, realizing in a flash that his brother was intimate with these people, whose rock homes line the road to the Sacro Monte.

'You will soon,' he was told. There was no time to find out more about the matter, for Don José was shouting from the door of the taxi which had brought them. A crowd of Americans were arriving; he did not want to be mixed up with them. Juan sat consumed with inward excitement, while the taxi jolted down to the Plaza Nueva.

Crazed with his romantic love for Pilár, Juan was pouring himself out on paper, and, to an observant eye, betrayed in his every look and movement that he was a young man in love. There was nothing about her which did not move him to transports of adoration, and her gentle and cool friendliness, which she herself called love, for him caused him agonies. At sixteen, love is an agonizing business; how much more agonizing does it become when the object of adoration has the advantage of more than twelve months in age, and is guarded like a jewel in a shrine?

It was the refinement of cruelty that he and she should be living under the same roof; with Felipa always on guard, there were no opportunities for the tender dalliance which any lover longs to indulge. Juan had started to fade a little under the stress of it; he looked—and felt—awful; thin as a rail, continually fevered from his sleepless nights, with eyes like charred holes in a sheet of white paper; but the need to conceal his condition

from his father forced from him a pathetic and hectic gaiety that belied his real feelings.

Ordinarily Don José would have noticed such a state of affairs, but Don José was blind indeed in those days; or, rather, his sight was turned inward, upon himself. He held his newly acknowledged love in his heart like a dove, fondling it, looking tenderly at it, and marvelling a little that so soft, so gentle a thing could have taken up its lodging in so harsh a tenement. Under its influence he felt himself capable of the most superhuman acts of nobility and self-sacrifice. He had no time to spare for any other thought, seeking only some means by which he might prove his nobility before Pilár.

His manner towards both the children, as he called them, was benign; his morose moods seemed entirely to have passed from him, and never did Juan recollect his father's displaying so prolonged an attitude of serene paternity towards himself.

Don José's conduct towards Pilár was as circumspect as ever, and in this he found a source of pride. He swelled with arrogance upon the thought that he, at fifty, or thereabouts, was in full possession of his virility, a state by no means common to men of his age and circumstances, and that, in spite of this fact, his respect and reverence for the girl could hold his virility in check, until a suitable moment came. He could not make up his mind what that suitable moment would be, for he had prided himself—after that single revelatory flash, when he had informed the girl that her betrothal was at an end—on regarding Pilár as though she were indeed his own daughter, and, so far as he was concerned, sexless as an angel.

So Juan, free from surveillance, continued to indulge his own madness, and to find a slight relief in being able, occasionally, to convey something of it to Pilár by means of a poem. He was beginning to write very good poetry, but the tragedy of his occupation, its futility and lack of direction were already burnt into his brain. He knew too well the lot of the writer in Spain; he had too flagrant an example before him in Granada, with one man drinking his soul to hell in *Escribanía*, and another of his

kind carrying the beer-tankards in a low pothouse of the city. If Miguel's revolution was going to do something for the starving poets of Spain, if it was going to destroy the Damoclean sword of expatriation that hangs over every Spaniard who ventures to raise a corner of the curtain which for centuries has hung between the people and the truth they have given up hope of finding—then he would be a revolutionary. At the age of sixteen a sense of his own tragic destiny had already gripped Juan's soul; his passion for Pilár was but an extension of the tragedy.

And Pilár, conscious in her way of the love both of Juan and of his father, made happy by it, was as far as a child might be from realizing how she might requite it. She had a single-track mind, capable of terrific concentration that dismissed all considerations apart from the object upon which it was centred, and the thing that focused it now was gratitude—gratitude to Don José for all his goodness to her. Her religion took a slightly secondary place in her desire to repay this goodness, and all her simplicity of mind and purpose was directed into the channel of housewifery. She was learning from Felipa how to cook; she went solemnly to shop with Felipa, and learned how to avoid being cheated by the market women; she became knowing over centimos and gravely censorious of the laundress. She gave so much of herself to these occupations that she was conscious of Juan's worship only as one may be conscious of sunshine, or of a shady grove; one is grateful for both, but one does not voice one's gratitude, because both are commonplaces of existence.

The great bond of unity between the two women was their determination that the life of Don José should be surrounded with every possible comfort. This devotion to his physical comfort, for so many years the ruling motive of Felipa's life, was added to Pilár's religion until it became, insensibly, a part of it, and, for a while, the greater part. She did not neglect her religious duties, but she no longer sought excuses for prolonging them; after she had said her prayers, there were the peas to shell, the brasses to polish, and Don José's immaculate linen to examine on its return from the washer-woman, to see that nothing was

missing, nothing frayed. Just as she had dedicated herself to the comfort of Doña Mercedes in expiation of her share in the deception of Don José, so now she dedicated herself to Don José's comfort, partly, and consciously, in further expiation, but much more largely, and unconsciously, in thanksgiving for her release.

The least of his actions became important to her, as they were to Felipa; a tone of his voice, a flicker of his eyelid, conveyed infallibly to her whether or not all was well with him.

There was no jealousy between the two women. On Felipa's part, she was incapable of jealousy, because throughout her life she had accepted fate and her submission was complete. And Pilár had no need of jealousy, because to her was given the higher part than Felipa's; to share his confidence about his sons and to give him that singular, quiet sympathy which needed no worldly experience to make it complete.

Thus, with her mind dually occupied, and the serenity of her soul restored, Pilár had little time to spare for romantic conjecture about the boy who at her elbow went through the dementia of unacknowledged love.

Her own health at this time was giving her a little trouble. She tired easily; would often begin a task and have to leave its finishing to Felipa. Her stamina, impaired by the self-imposed régime of the previous months, was unable to resist the airless nights, the sudden awakening to street noises that she suffered in the Casa del Matador. She no longer had her terrace to sit upon, no longer the nightingales sang in her ears, no longer the myrtle and balsam gave off their ineffable scent at dusk. Her squalid surroundings were, unconsciously, impressing themselves upon her; she was frequently, and without apparent reason, oppressed. The life of the Manigua, its sexual traffic, its secret meanings bruised her spirit, because, crossing day by day its broken spaces, she could not avoid seeing many things that had never even touched the fringes of her imagination before.

It was Felipa who first noticed her condition, coming on Pilár one day at the head of the stairs, clutching the balustrade with the other hand clasped to her side. The girl was struggling for

breath. Even that short journey of twenty steps or so had smitten the breath from her lungs. Felipa sought Don José.

'Your Honour's house is a fine one; there is not such another house in Granada. I myself have never seen such a palace—but then I am poor and ignorant. It is not for me to say what is good and what is bad. It wants nothing . . .' She paused. Don José, staring at her in astonishment, barked :

'What is it you are saying?'

'But it is placed on an offal heap; and delicate plants do not thrive on offal.' Her eyes asked pardon for her boldness.

'Speak plainly,' he ordered her.

'The señorita is sick,' said Felipa.

A great struggle now took place in his innermost. The settlement of Pepe's future—*when* it was settled: Don José, accustomed to shutting his eyes to what he did not wish to see, now wholly discounted the American—would make a considerable difference to his financial position; it would remove the major drain on his purse, and enable him to spend more freely than, latterly, he had been in the habit of doing. But Don José was not fond of spending. Even during his palmy years it had cost him a genuine effort of will to make the lavish display of means expected from a first-class matador. It offended his possessive sense that he should enrich others with wealth he had captured by risking his own life; and those on whom he scattered largesse with a well assumed prodigality would have been surprised if they had known that El Bailarín kept account, almost to a duro, of the money he launched here and there; that he realized precisely who returned and who failed to return his *quid pro quo*; and the knowledge deepened his cynicism.

So now his natural avarice made war with his desire to perform a splendid gesture. He was not blind to the justice of Felipa's words: La Manigua was, plainly, not a health resort; it was not a quarter in which a young woman of refined rearing could be expected to flourish. And, while the Casa del Matador satisfied his present needs, he was not averse from the idea—if Pepe's affairs went as they should—of purchasing another property.



Careful as he had been, on the night of the tertulia at Agüero, to refrain from any marked expressions of enthusiasm, he had been impressed by the hacienda, with its galleried façade overlooking a garden of palm-trees and small, formal flower-beds. From it one could see the mountains defining themselves darkly at the edge of the vast, star-scattered sky, and the lights of Granada that piled themselves on its low hills. Almost any place looks beautiful under moonlight, he had reflected; but the ancient cellars flanked with the man-deep terra-cotta jars in which the wines fermented; the modern hydraulic plant for irrigation; the acres of vineyard that stretched beyond the myrtle hedge—nor moon nor sun could affect these tokens of prosperity. Don José had gravely followed Don Raimundo and Don Alonso from barn to cellar, from cellar to stable; he knew a bait was being dangled under his nose, and he was too old a fish to nibble. He expressed his admiration in fine, formal, noncommittal Spanish, condoled with Don Raimundo on having to leave a property upon which he had clearly spent a little fortune, and smiled to himself at having resisted the temptation offered to him by his old friend Don Alonso—who walked a little behind, whistling and singing as if the very last thought in his mind was business, and, so far as he was concerned, this was just a friendly meeting, arranged to gratify his friends!

But, seated in the garden, when attention was diverted from him by the art of the guitarrista, and the heaven-questing voice of Don Alonso went up into the blue night air, Don José had known a pang of envy. Here was this man, still young, with his young wife—the second—and his seven tall sons, who moved through the shadows of the palm like terra-cotta statues come to life; all seven of them handsome, virile fellows, with girls in the offing; and the young wife and her sister, sitting placidly together like twin Demeters, dedicated to the pleasure and comfort of the owner of the vineyard—these reminded Don José unpleasantly of his own solitary circumstances. And to watch Don Raimundo, in his open-necked shirt that left revealed the hairy expanse of his broad chest, dispensing hospitality with

the air of a man who is a king of women—that got him on the raw.

As he looked at the lighted façade of the house, at the boys moving darkly through the palms, at the servants who came and went with wine and plates of ham and olives; as the young wife rose, and the light behind her, blotting her figure against the ashen pink of the building, revealed her pregnancy—covetousness took possession of Don José's soul. But he resisted it. He had not then known anything of Pepe's plans. But he was bitterly envious of the owner of this pleasant place, whose possession lent its possessor a dignity which was lacking from his own background.

After his conversation with Felipa his mind began timidly, and with characteristic caution, to play with the idea of buying Agüadero—if Pepe's affairs came out rightly. The vision of himself as a landed proprietor was an agreeable one; but not one to be entertained lightly. On conditions. On conditions. . . . The mind of Don José darted away like a timid mouse from the conditions.

About this time his blindness where Juan was concerned was brought to a most inconvenient finish.

It was the fault of Pilár. She should not, perhaps, have grown so careless of the thin wisps of paper that Juan folded around the stalks of the flowers he gave her. And the one in question had reached her while she was, under Felipa's tuition, preparing a paella for Don José's dinner. She thrust it hurriedly into her belt—and her belt was loose. She did not know the paper had slipped out on her hurried way across the patio. A draught slid it across the marble—through the door of Don José's office. Pilár fetched her mantilla; she was going to mass. In church, kneeling before her Byzantine Virgin, she forgot that she had ever slipped a piece of paper into her belt.

Don José picked up the paper idly. He made a diversion of it, for he was tired of the conversation of Don Antonio, with whom he was on stiff terms. The priest had forborne to add anything further to his strictures on the presence of Pilár in the

house, but there was a barrier, of which both were conscious, in his intercourse with Don José. He continued, however, stubbornly to visit the casa, on the pretext of supervising Juan's Latin, and his conversation this morning had been on the unedifying topic of Juan's languor and indifference to his studies. There was surely something wrong, insinuated the priest, with cunning eyelids. Ordinarily, Juan showed an admirable industry, second only to his brother Miguel—from whom, no doubt, Don José had heard? (pin-prick number two)—and now, to-day, he had calmly avowed his disinclination for work and had taken it upon himself to dismiss Don Antonio from his presence!

Don José concealed a smile. The notion of Juan ordering Don Antonio out of the house went well with him. That was good! He spread out his hands.

'It may be he feels that the time has come for him to stop lessons. After all, Juan is now a man; he cannot go on being a scholar for ever. There are other things to think of when one grows hair on the face!'

'Or perhaps he no longer finds it possible to apply himself, with so powerful a distraction at hand,' put in Don Antonio maliciously.

His normally agreeable nature had suffered during the last few weeks. In all directions the family of Díaz Marquez seemed to be slipping out of his fingers. Pepe's affair with the American! Miguel! Don José's independent attitude with regard to Pilár Borrás! And now Juan, slipping the traces. Don Antonio was a man who thrived on petty authority. He liked to have temporal as well as spiritual charge of his flock; he liked to have his opinion consulted—and apparently Don José and his family had given up consulting him. It was a nice thing if he was to lose his tutoring salary—which he had counted on receiving for at least another twelve months—at the instance of Juan's caprice. The prospect liberated all the spite in his nature and made him wholly disagreeable.

'If you are thinking of marrying Pilár Borrás, my son,' he said, with a cattish smile, 'I advise you to take steps about it quickly.'

It was assuredly only the priest's cloth that saved him then from the physical violence of Don José. He had put into brutal words a thing which Don José had concealed tenderly, carefully, even from himself. He had dreaded to admit, even in the darkness of his own soul, the possibility of such a thing as a carnal attachment between him and Pilár. It was as though she stood, for him, in a state of metamorphosis: half-way between her mystical incarnation, in which she represented a saint, and her material incarnation, as a woman. Don Antonio's words had pushed her brutally into the second stage: trembling, quivering, a little torn and bruised, like a butterfly dragged prematurely from its chrysalis, she was forced into her womanhood, and he, Don José, forced into abrupt acceptance of the metamorphosis before either he or she were prepared for it.

The blood boiled in his temples, and he became for a moment quite blind with his rage and pain. It was at this moment that the scrap of paper was wafted across the floor, almost to his feet. Hardly knowing what he did, but conscious of the necessity of regaining his self-control, he made the purely mechanical gesture of bending to pick it up. It was folded, and he did not open it, but sat there, pressing it between his fingers and moistening his lips, which had gone dry. As he said nothing, the priest, with an ironical smile that expressed his conscious triumph, rose from his chair and left the room.

Don José began to groan; if either of the women had been in the house they must have come to him, for his groans were clearly to be heard in the patio. He was quite unaware of the noise he was making; he did not realize it even when the door was pushed ajar, and old Inéz crawled slowly and blindly into the room.

She was hardly ever to be seen in these days; her pretence at taking a share in the household work abandoned, she inhabited some dim corner of the domestic regions from which she rarely issued, even for food. All of her faculties save her hearing were gone, and that was as acute as a rat's. That it was that had led her hither, and, her blind, colourless eyes availing her nothing,

she tilted her ear towards the quarter from which these terrible sounds were proceeding, and advanced no step towards their author.

Since many years the wrinkles had blotted out all expression from the face of old Inéz. It was a face like an Aztec carving, scored and scored again with knife-marks that stood for nothing but the zeal of the artist for elaboration. In the case of old Inéz, Time was the artist. The savage tracery of her features had begun long years before the death of Doña Laura, out of whom, for Inéz, the sun, moon, and stars had shone; with whom she shared, vicariously, every pang that had come to her adored mistress through her marriage to the matador. They had expected her to die when Doña Laura died; she was old enough. Then they said she lived in order to carry out the faithful service of her mistress.

But as she stood, in the darkness of the blind, listening to the groans of Don José, she knew that it was for this that she had lived. She, who had clutched her own meagre bosom in agony while Doña Laura's groans went out into the silence of a locked room, knew that now she might sing her own *Nunc Dimittis*: 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.' For that which she had waited had come to pass: the destroyer of her mistress's life was being himself destroyed, by some force which mattered little to Inéz. Her soul trembled in ecstasy of deliverance; she raised her hands, her blind eyes in a gesture of supreme thanksgiving, and the design of her face resolved itself into bliss.

At long last, Don José recovered from his stupor and looked down at his own hands, which were clutched upon the slip of paper. He had folded and pressed and mangled it, and it surprised him now to see that there was writing in ink upon it. He picked up and mechanically adjusted his spectacles, then straightened the paper out upon his desk. In a few minutes he was in possession of Juan's secret.

A second shock following upon the former one had the effect for a time of stunning him. He read Juan's effusion—full of the 'pallid cheeks,' 'fevered hands,' and 'fading eyes' of his chief poetic inspiration and model, Becquer—twice, before stupefaction

gave place to rage that was mingled with fear. He remembered the anxiety he had felt upon the day he first saw Pilár and Juan together; how the innocence of the one had seemed, to his fevered imagination, to leap towards the innocence of the other; how they seemed bound together in their innocence, a sword which separated the pair of them from him.

At sixteen a youth is too young to marry, but he is not too young to love; at seventeen a maiden may consider herself beyond the pretensions of a boy twelve months her junior, but does this mean that she is deaf to his wooing? What was going on between Pilár and Juan? What snare were they preparing, of their purity, to ensnare his own feet?

This conversation took place under cover of darkness. The limitations of the material world dissolve when the earth spins away from the sun. Truth is born in the extinction of a candle-flame.

'I cannot say that I have come by repentance. The Church offered me repentance like a plate of rotten figs; my gorge rose at it; I ate; my stomach rejected it; the Church forced me to swallow my vomit; it poisoned me. You wiped the sweat from my brow and the saliva from my mouth, and the accursed words "hell" and "purgatory" never once crossed your lips. You were the antidote to my poison.

'It is because you were so good and so meek that I came to regard you as my comrade and my conscience. All the same, I have kept our friendship hidden away, because I was ashamed of it; a man does not like his conscience to be made public.

'If you had had a child by me it would have had to have been different. Did you ever think of that?'

'No, no, señor; never.'

'Or that I might have put you at the head of my household and forced my sons to regard you as my wife? They would not have been unready to do it. Did not you ever think of that?'

'No, no. I am only a humble woman, without education; I can neither read nor write. It would not have done for your Honour to make me so important to your life.'

**'May the earth swallow me up if you have not deserved it. There is something in you which is not in the ordinary run of women. Ten—twenty years ago I should not have seen even that. It is one of the things that you have done for me; you have made me perceive many things to which I was blind. You have opened my eyes—for which I bless and curse you. It is your own fault if they now become the weapons of your destruction.'**

**'Your Honour knows that I have always bowed to your will; nothing has happened that can make any difference to that.'**

**'The heart of man is proverbially base and empty of gratitude. Yet I say to you now, I am not without gratitude to you for all you have done.'**

**'Your Honour gives me too much.'** The voice of the speaker was muffled, as though its owner were weeping. **'What I have done I have done for the sake of humility and love.'**

**'It is a curious thing that until I knew you I knew very little about love. When I married—I suppose one does not think about love when one is a young man. It is a thing that gratifies one's body, like bread and wine. I thought that was the whole thing. Why did you show me it was not? Why did you lay your meekness and devotion upon my eyelids like a holy balm, so that my eyes were opened? Why were you not content with that which makes other women content? If you had had sense you would have known that, so far as it affected you, my savagery was safer than my gentleness.'**

**'It is your own fault that there have got to be changes. You took it upon yourself to show me that one does not mingle the pure with the base; one cannot string a pearl on a necklet of glass beads.'**

**'I am going to marry Pilár Borrás.'**

**'Si, señor; may your Honour be blessed by God.'**

**'She is a jewel in the crown of our Lady of Sorrows. A lily in the garden of the Annunciation. The grass lifts up its head and sings when her feet crush it, and the stones cry out a Hail, Mary. How much use should I have had, twenty years ago, for such a woman. Answer me that, Felipa Vargas, who are my conscience.'**

'The waters ran swiftly twenty years ago. There were so many things that were beautiful and gay, and your Honour was in such a hurry to make sure you didn't miss any! There was no time to go looking for the fruit under the leaves.'

'Twenty years ago I was like Pepe. Like Pepe, I was conscious only of my strength. I was ignorant of many things. For instance, I did not know that, if one loves a woman, one must treat her sometimes like a little child. One must be tender with her as with an infant. One must see the whole of her; not only her eyes and her teeth and her hair and her breasts, but the look she has in her eyes when she is looking at things other than oneself; the way her lips move when she is talking to other women. And one has to learn all these things as a scholar learns a lesson, so that one may be able to satisfy the unspoken desires of her soul.'

'That is nobly said,' whispered the woman, for every word that was spoken was like a nail driven into her heart. She had been prepared for this crucifixion, but all her pious resignation could not prevent the pain from torturing her. He, lost in his own thoughts, continued to speak aloud, less to her than to himself.

'Is it not a fearful thing that one has to be old before one can know all this?—that one cannot have one's wisdom while the sap flows green through one's limbs and one's flesh is still tender with youth?' . . .

'I am as timorous as a mouse. I dread the hour when she and I come together as man and woman, for she is bound, out of her saintliness, to discover all that I am not. I cannot conquer her, as I could conquer other women, by a display of my manhood. I must confess and humble myself to her, and receive my penitence from her hands. Yes, my own penitence has got to come back to me through her, before I can find my redemption.

'But, first, everything has to be made very clean—like a platter that has been scoured with sand.

'I am buying Aguadero.'

'That is a very good thing to do; it is easier to make a new life in a new house.'



'It will be more than a house. It will be a chapel, a shrine—a holy place to contain Saint Pilár. What do you think, you who know me so well—too well—can I live with a saint?'

'Not if the thought frightens you,' she answered tenderly.

'*Madre de Dios*, how should it not frighten me? I know myself. I love, I love and I love; one who is hardly yet to be thought of as a woman; and who am I that it should be given to me to make a woman out of a saint? The very words sound blasphemous. Yet, if the action brings me to damnation, my mind is made up to do it! So now let the wrath of God descend and shatter me,' concluded Don José.

After a pause he groped in the dark for Felipa's hand; he found her smooth, naked shoulder; his hand slid down calmly along the satin flesh until it found her own, work-roughened, burning.

'You have been a good thing in my life; a good servant, a good mistress. I thank you for it all.'

He heard the rustle her body made as she rose in the darkness; the soft, even tread of her bare feet across the floor. It struck him with a touch of loneliness and horror that he would not hear that soft, accustomed sound again; for a moment he started up to call her back—an action which could have but one ending: the renunciation of all towards which his spirit now moved, and the resumption of the habits of a lifetime. Her '*Con Dios*' reached him from the farthest extremity of the darkness; the door opened; closed with hardly a sound.

Don José lay back, his heart beating in great, slow strokes against his breastbone. Neither had said the word; but each knew it was the end. Felipa would not go to Aguadero.

## Seventeen

**D**ON JOSE had become a spy. He seldom left the house, for it was intolerable to him to think that, during his absences, things might take place of which he was ignorant. He developed a mania for leaving doors ajar, for sitting where he was concealed from other people but could himself observe most of what went on. He was continually devising new ways to take his household by surprise: would never leave any instructions as to the hour of his return, if circumstances obliged him to go into the town.

One afternoon he spent the time of the siesta in altering the position of a mirror that hung in his office. Its original place had been behind the door; he took it down and tried it in various places, without, however, achieving the result which he desired. Eventually he discovered that by placing it, as though accidentally, upon the seat of a chair, and by leaving the door of his office about six inches open, he could command a view of the greater part of the patio and of the staircase; so that no one could come in or out, or go to the upper parts of the house, without his knowing it. He was so much relieved by this achievement that he actually went out for an hour. When he returned, the glass was again in its place on the wall! His roar of rage brought Felipa.

'Who has dared to alter things in this room?' he shouted, almost inarticulate with passion.

'Your Honour must pardon; it was I, who thought that your Honour had taken the glass down because the cord was old and rotten; see, I have put a new one in its place,' she said, exhibiting her handiwork.

It seemed as though a new and awful intelligence had taken possession of Don José: he knew that she lied; that she had realized his motive, and had done her best to save him from his own ignobility. He could no more hide from her what was in his heart than he could hide it from God. This filled him with a profound feeling of hopelessness, and he stood in silence while her strong arms lifted the heavy glass down from the wall and replaced it upon the chair. He would not suffer her coercion towards good; yet, as she went from the room, he felt as though he had cast out an angel. He wanted her gone, he wanted her there; he wanted to be alone, he dreaded the solitude of his own company. He was in hell. He felt her knowing that he was in hell. He smote his brow with the flat of his hand.

'Why do I allow myself to suffer in this way, when by one simple act, by a single question, I can finish it? Why can I not finish it? What is this fear? What am I afraid of? Why do I allow myself to be tortured?'

The simple, the noble thing, was to go to Pilár, to tell her that he loved her; the thing which froze his marrow was the dread that she would look at him with her kind eyes and tell him that she loved Juan. Don José felt that he could not bear to hear this from Pilár's lips: that he would go raving mad if she uttered such words to him. He must find out for himself, by spying upon them, if this was the truth, before he asked his question. And if it should be true? He felt his love for Juan draining out of his heart as he thought of the hideous possibility; the poison of jealousy, which had plunged its fang into him at the moment he first saw them together, fermented in his veins. How mad he had been not to have sent Juan back to Sanpedro for awhile! Suddenly he knew that the presence of Juan at Aguadero would be insupportable. How could he, a middle-aged man, run the fearful risk of having a youth of Juan's age under the same roof as his young wife?

Much of his suffering came from the realization that such ideas as these were corrupting his love for Pilár: that, more and more surely, although against his will, his love was being forced into

the worn channel of old loves; the thing he had cherished upon a sweet and perilous plane of pure idealism was beginning to be sullied by the elements of which his other loves had been made. The delicacy, the mystic quality of the appeal which Pilár made to him, was imperilled by the gross human intention which gained upon his thoughts of her. For the first time he felt these thoughts tinged with the physical: that such a thing could be, filled him with a burning terror—the terror of a superstitious man convicted of blasphemy. He had desired to take all the good which had been kindled in him through his relationship with Felipa and lay it at Pilár's feet; he saw this secret relationship in its true relation to his design of living; his life had had to pass through Felipa's as through a school, in preparation for the next stage of his redemption, which was Pilár. The goodness, the sweet and humble wholesomeness of this serving woman, had been the first stage of his purification. She was his bridge across a gulf from which, as with vertigo, his soul drew back. With her support he desired, in one tremendous spiritual effort, to fling all the remaining evil of his former years into that bottomless gulf, so that he arrived at his next station, the station of Pilár, unburdened. He desired to come to her humbly, like a child, and slowly, slowly, by an infinite love and patience, compel her love, so that she became, of her own free will, wholly his. And now he knew that the power to control his baser nature was slipping from him; that his thoughts of her were becoming inflamed with passion; that the loveliest and least inexplicable thing that had ever come into his life was spoiled, was made commonplace. The thing that went shooting down into the gulf was not his impurity, but his dignity and pride: his *pundonor*—lacking which he became shrivelled.

He tried to school his mind; to recall the tender if somewhat abstracted love he had always bestowed upon his youngest son; the pride he felt in Juan's intellectual equipment; the pride he had always taken in the boy's looks, so much more delicate, refined, and aristocratic than either of his brothers. But these very things, which had once filled him with pride, now stung him. They represented the advantages that Juan held over him-

self, against which the boy's youth, his raw lack of experience, would hardly throw the weight of a feather. These two young creatures, whom with so wilful a disregard for Nature he had brought together under his own roof, were following Nature's law in falling in love with one another. Without knowing it, Don José gave a hollow groan. For it seemed to him that he was to be smitten through each of his sons in turn; that his cup of suffering and expiation was not to be drained until he had tasted its utmost bitterness.

Juan and Pilár come into the patio together. Nothing could have been more innocent than their occupation—Juan was carrying for Pilár a large board on which pressed figs were spread to dry. She looked up at the sky with a quaint assumption of housewifely wisdom.

'Do you think the sun is stronger here or up in the mirador?'

Don José's jealous ears, strained for Juan's reply, only caught a murmur; in his abominable mirror he watched the two young creatures straying about the patio, arguing gently about the degree of the sun in this corner or that. What did this artless prattle cover? What secret lay hid in the approach of Juan's hand to Pilár's as she took the board from him?—He felt he would go mad if he could not find out.

There they sat on the edge of the fountain basin, like a couple of perched doves: their dark heads close together. . . .

'*Juan!*' roared Don José.

The boy's face turned, startled: did it also look guilty? Don José remembered in time to fling a cloak across the betraying mirror, before his son entered the room. Juan stood there, obedient; a little surprised. He had learnt the trick, by supreme self-control, of concealing his embarrassment when Don José discovered him and Pilár together. But he could not conceal from the newly opened eyes of Don José that he was very thin; that there were black rings under his eyes; and that the fading sunburn of Sanpedro left him yellow as a guinea.

'Have you nothing better to do than waste your time with your sister?'

'I—father——' began Juan.

'Don Antonio complains of your work,' snapped Don José. 'If you refuse to do your lessons, there is at least no need for you to spend your time in hanging round the women. Go to the *kio'ko* and get my *Clarín* for me.'

Juan turned on his heel without a word, and went. Pulling the cloak away from the mirror as soon as his back was turned, Don José saw the speechless look the two exchanged; saw Juan shrug his shoulders. *Madre de Dios*, there was an understanding between them. They did not even require to speak. Their silence commented on his behaviour. . . .

He summoned Felipa. She came, wiping her hands on her apron.

'Why were Juan and Pilár alone just now? You know my wishes.'

She raised her shoulders and her eyes to heaven.

'But, señor! I cannot follow on their heels like a dog; I have my work. I have your Honour's dinner to prepare. It is only a minute or two since we all came from the market together——'

'What?—Was Juan hanging round the market stalls with you?' shouted Don José.

'Sí, señor. Juan is very good; he has helped me to carry the basket; it is very heavy.'

'And they returned with you?' glared Don José.

'No, señor. They left me at the wine-shop, where I went in to pay for the wine; because your Honour does not wish that the señorita should go into the wine-shops. But it was a very little time; five—ten minutes at the most.'

'And when you came back, what were they doing?'

'They were in the kitchen, pressing the figs.'

Don José gnawed his lips. He could feel her understanding and her pity, and it humiliated him. Since she knew his shame, why could she not take steps to protect him? He had the impulse to fling his arms about her and sob on her bosom like a little child; and at the same time he hated her, because her knowledge of him robbed him of his pride.

'I pay you to obey me,' he muttered ignobly. She hung her head, for the words cut her to the core.

'Si, señor. In everything I do my best to obey your Honour.'

He wanted to cry, 'What is your opinion? Do you believe that they have fallen in love with each other?' but he could not face her probable answer, nor the pitying tone in which she would give it. Felipa stood at the door, looking out into the patio, where Pilár, left alone, was delicately fingering the figs: separating them from each other, so that they would dry more quickly.

'Look, señor,' said Felipa softly, stretching her hand backwards to Don José, who was standing behind her. 'Look: it is a little angel. Everything she does, she does it as though she were lighting a candle to the blessed saints. Those figs are for your Honour: I told her how your Honour likes dried figs, and nothing would suit her this morning but we must go wandering through the market looking for the very best. *Santa Maria*—we must have gone to every stall! She was not to be put off with rubbish, our little one. Sometimes it was, "Those are not big enough," and sometimes, "Those are not ripe enough. Blessed Virgin," says she, "if we could only find some figs like the ones that grew on our old fig-tree up at the Carmen!" And if you had seen her delight when we found the stall of La Jorobada. La Jorobada always has the best figs; they grow against a wall that is always in the sun. But, even so, the señorita would not buy until she had tasted. And then she turned to me and smiled like an angel. "Look how the Blessed Virgin has answered my prayer!" she said. "These are the figs I was looking for, with their tears still upon them." All the way back her talk was of nothing but your Honour—how you would like the figs and praise her for finding such fine ones. There is nothing in her mind but how to please and serve your Honour.'

The slow, serene voice, like the voice of a mother who sends her child to sleep by telling it a fairy-tale, flowed on. Don José, who at first had wanted to cry out, 'Be silent, woman! Do you want to murder me?'—grew gradually calmer beneath its subtle spell. He went to his desk and pretended to search for something among his papers, nodding his head and saying:

'Yes, yes, indeed there is none like her for goodness.'

When Juan returned with *El Clarín*, his father had gone out. Pilár was still in the patio, but sitting idle, with the palms of her hands lying upward on her lap. The expression of her face was grave and concentrated, as though her thoughts troubled her. She beckoned to Juan, who looked apprehensively towards the door of Don José's office before joining her.

'Our father has gone out. I think there is something troubling him.'

'Why do you think that?' asked Juan, frowning.

'Haven't you noticed, the last few days? He generally tells me his troubles, but he has not said a word. I have said my prayers for him as usual, but—he is different. I do not know what it is.'

'Yes,' conceded Juan slowly. 'He is disturbed, and he is not troubling to conceal it. That is not like *El Bailarín*. As a rule he hates people to know all is not well with him.'

'It is almost as if he were angry with us,' said Pilár. 'I have never known him to be angry.'

'He has been angry a lot lately,' conceded Juan; he continued in a cold voice, 'He is angry with me.'

'Oh, no!' cried Pilár. 'He loves you with all his heart.'

'He is angry with me,' persisted Juan stubbornly. 'Because I love you.'

The silver-circles of Pilár's eyes widened.

'How should that be? There is nothing wrong about loving one another. We are commanded to love one another. I love you too, dearly.'

'Oh, Pilár,' groaned Juan, taking her hand in his. 'Can't you understand? How can you read my verses and not understand?'

A faint flicker, as of doubt, crossed her eyes.

'You love me,' said Juan, with passionate resentment, 'as you love a little goat, a kitten, something that follows you about, that you can stroke with your hand.'

'I do not love you at all like that,' answered Pilár slowly. 'I do not know how I love you. . . . You are my beautiful little brother, who is so good and kind and loving to me! Yet that does not seem to be all. There is something more——'



'Pilar,' gasped Juan. 'Will you let me kiss the palms of your hands?'

She gravely offered them to him; he closed his eyes and pressed his lips to them; a shudder shook him from head to foot. When he raised his head, trembling and smiling, she too was smiling at him.

'Did you like that?' he breathed.

'Yes,' she admitted shyly.

'Did it make you love me more?'

'I think—perhaps—it did!' said Pilar, with pauses between the words.

'Do you think, if I did it every day for a little while, it would make you love me a great deal?'

'I think—perhaps—it might!'

'Oh, if you knew how I dream about you!' he whispered fervently. 'The night before last I dreamed we were in the Alhambra; it was night, and there was a moon. All about us was the perfume of the balsam and myrtles; you leaned over to look at yourself in a pool, and your face was like a little moon down in the water!'

'I never have dreams like that,' said Pilar, interested.

'Wait a minute.—Then something told me that that was really you in the water! Do you understand? The one standing beside me was only a dream or a ghost, and the real you was the reflection. So that if I dived into the water I would reach the real you.'

'*Madre mia!*—And did you do it?'

'Of course I did it. Don't you understand? I would go through anything, through fire itself, to be with you. So I leapt into the water to seize you in my arms—and of course it dissolved, and you weren't there—and I woke up.'

'*Ay de mi!*' she said, taking his hand compassionately.

'To wake and find myself alone—it was terrible. It made me weep!' The retrospective tears stood in Juan's eyes. She put up her cool hand and touched his head.

'Poor little one!'

'Do you really love me, Pilár?' he whispered haggardly.

She leaned a little towards him, and, before either of them had time to realize what the other was doing, their lips met. For one inexpressible moment, which frightened each with its strangeness, each felt the softness of the other's lips on theirs: each recoiled aghast from an experience for which neither was prepared. How often Juan had both thought and dreamt of kissing Pilár!—but always in some carefully devised setting of trees and moonlight and utter aloneness, when she should of her own accord yield her lips to his humble importunacy. That it should take place like this, in the crude light of noon, in his own patio, where they could be overlooked from the gallery windows, or by any casual passer-by who lingered, as strangers sometimes lingered, at the doorway of the Casa del Matador, took him utterly aback, crushed him with a sense of untimeliness. He was the first to recover his powers of speech.

'Pilár—no one must ever know!' he stammered. 'Whatever happens, my father must never know!'

She, pale and terrified, clutched at the little crucifix which hung in the bosom of her gown.

'Why? Why?' she cried wildly. 'There is no sin in love! Oh, do not ask me to deceive him again!'

Juan, although the younger, had regained his composure.

'The most beautiful things are the sacred ones; and what is sacred is secret,' he pronounced. 'It is not my father's fault that he cannot understand. I expect he thinks I am too young. *Gloria mia*, we shall not be deceiving him; we are not doing anything. It will be soon enough in a year's time to tell him——'

'*Madre mia*, a year is so long,' she sighed. 'And what shall we tell him then?'

'Why, that we love each other and wish to be betrothed,' said Juan softly.

'Oh, no!' cried Pilár. At Juan's look of disconcertion she put her hand out towards him. 'I have been betrothed once, and I did not like it,' she confessed.

'But this would be quite different,' urged Juan. 'When two

people truly love one another, a betrothal must be the most beautiful thing in the world!’

‘No,’ she answered, and looked about her; a fawn-coloured dove had flown down from the roof and was placidly strutting about the ground, looking for grain. ‘I am so happy here, so conscious of the blessing of God—I want it always to be the same. Just to live here, with you and your father loving me, and learning how to look after the house for you both——’

‘And is that going to be enough for you, Pilár?’ he said sadly. He flung away his self-control. ‘Can’t you understand that is not enough for a man?—When I am mad for you, is it going to be enough for me to watch you cooking the dinner and mending the linen? Is that all I am to have? Do you want to drive me out of my mind, when I am dreaming of your eyes and your—your lips, and longing to seize you in my arms—am I to be content with watching you and Felipa at work together?’

She said nothing, but he saw the dawning of a great fear in her eyes. Before he could catch or detain her, she was running from him across the patio: she was half-way up the stairs—when she suddenly put hand to her side and crumpled on the stairs. Terrified Juan shouted for Felipa, who came, also running, saw what had happened, lifted Pilár in her strong arms, and carried her into her room.

Juan was waiting when Felipa came downstairs.

‘What is the matter with Pilár?’

‘Nothing, nothing at all,’ said Felipa calmly. ‘She has had a hard time with her grandmother—God rest her soul; she will be like a flower refreshed when she gets out into the country.’

It was the first reference Juan had heard to the projected move to Aguadero, and, with his mind full of other things, he did not take it in. Felipa’s hand came, motherly, on his shoulder.

‘Go out into the sun, little one; the sun is bright and God is good.’

He moved slackly across the patio; almost his mind rejected the idea of God.

## Eighteen

I GUESS I'm just crazy about you,' muttered Clarissa Kapp van Dongen, with her teeth pressed against Bailarinito's ear. 'But trust you——! Like hell I trust you!'

As these remarks were made in the language which passes for English among waiters, cicerones, and continental mercenaries in general, Bailarinito made no reply beyond a slightly bored 'Qué?' His novia had him guessing. They were in the small room adjoining her bedroom, which she called her boudoir; the hotel furniture had been moved out, and it held, mainly, a pink velvet chaise-longue which travelled as part of Mrs. Kapp van Dongen's baggage. Without her chaise-longue, according to herself, she was crippled, stunted, deprived of half her personality; she just couldn't manage to express her true self unless she had the support of those *framboise* cushions. She wriggled among them now, twining herself more possessively round Bailarinito, who was a little abstracted owing to the fact that he was making his first appearance in a boiled shirt and tails.

Four hours, the resources of her beauty cabinet, a shot of the latest thing in stimulants, and the blood and nerves of her paid attendant had made a creditable piece of work of Clarissa. In the careful light she looked no more than thirty-five. A casual glance into the glass at her elbow assured her of the fact that there are no hairdressers in the world who can produce an effect equal to the Spanish ones.

She translated her remarks into phrase-book Spanish for Bailarinito's benefit; he looked down at her as though he doubted

her sanity. Was any man alive likely to prove false to a banking account like that? His expression changed to one of those practised looks of respectful adoration which concealed his total lack of respect for anything about Clarissa except her dollars. She shuddered; the breath ran out hissing between her closed teeth; her eyes vanished beneath the half-open lids—faintly crêpy in the morning, but smooth as mauve silk at the present moment, and lavishly fringed with black. She kept her fringes in a little box. God, what a waste it was that any men should be provisioned with eyelashes like these Spaniards! Her encarmined nails dug into Bailarinito's shoulder.

'You've made me mad about you. I've been mad about you ever since I set eyes on you. If you let me down, Bailarinito——'

He filled the awkward pause with an experienced kiss.

'It's not as if I don't know men,' she continued, with closed eyes; her lips hardly moved, the words came blurred, as though she were drugged, or half asleep. '*Hell!* I know men. Don't you forget that. I go' married, when I was a kid, to a man that promised me he'd be dead in twelve months. The dirty swine! He lasted twelve years. I guess I've never believed in men since that day.'

Bailarinito, used to these monologues that conveyed nothing to him, continued, automatically, to kiss; he had discovered that this was as good a way as any of keeping up his end of a conversation. She trembled voluptuously in his arms, but he had learned better than to *pousser au bout* his advantage. She was in the grip of her worst neurosis, which took the form of talking endlessly about her past—in the language which, to Bailarinito, who naturally had no standards, passed for English. It was tedious for Bailarinito, but there is always something.

Presently she chuckled a little, jerked herself suddenly free, and stretched out a truly beautiful arm for a cigarette.

'You should have seen my husband! We used to give dinner-parties, you know. Grand ones. And I had to sit opposite him, at the end of the table, looking elegant, and, inside me, yelling my head off. I wanted to shout at the people: "Look at my husband! Isn't he wonderful? You'd say he was alive, wouldn't

you? That's *life* at twenty dollars a shot, pumped in just before he came downstairs. If you stay too long you'll see if I'm right. Would any of you like to stay and see whether I'm right or not?'

Her eyes opened. She seemed to take in the presence of Bailarinito for the first time. Her Spanish returned to her.

'*Carramba!* How devilish you look in those tailor's-dummy clothes? Why did you have to buy them? You look like an English waiter on the stage!'

'They are the latest thing,' said Bailarinito, much offended. 'Very English; very correct.'

'They may be, but you look awful in them. You can't wear that kind of thing. I forbid you to wear that kind of thing!'

Bailarinito smiled and frowned at the same time.

'You want me always to dress like a bull-fighter in a Blasco Ibañez novel!'

'I want you to look like yourself. *Dios!* How wonderful you can look. And it pleases you to dress up like a *camerero* in a cheap restaurant. You've got no sense and no imagination.' Her face crumpled as though she were about to cry; she flung herself back on the cushions pettishly. 'Oh, well, I suppose I've got to put up with it. You are spoilt already; you think I will put up with anything because I have told you I love you.'

'That is not true,' lied Bailarinito stubbornly. 'I adore you. I live only to please you.'

'I suppose you said that to the other girl you were engaged to,' pouted Clarissa.

'Perhaps I did,' he answered impudently.

She suddenly sank her teeth into his hand, which lay on her arm. Bailarinito, taken by surprise, swore, and dragged it away.

'What, you a bull-fighter, and you can't bear a bit of pain?' she mocked.

'I can bear anything,' he boasted.

Quick as lightning she seized his hand, and pressed the burning tip of her cigarette on the back of it. Bailarinito winced, but pinned a glittering smile on his lips. Their eyes met, glaring enmity.

'I can see you don't want to see me in the ring on Sunday,' he sneered.

She gave a half-strangled cry, and pressed her lips upon the small raw scar.

'I adore you. You can hurt me in such a lot of ways. That's why I had to hurt you. I'll put some stuff on it; the pain will be gone in a moment.'

'There is no pain; and it is my left hand, so it does not matter,' said Bailarinito grandly. She leapt from the couch, and brought lint and ointment from a drawer.

'Now you'll see how clever I am. I was a nurse in the war. What do you think of that? If you get the cornada, I'll nurse you.'

'I believe you'd like me to get the cornada,' he muttered, unconsciously intuitive. Her eyes glazed; her fingers paused momentarily in their task.

'I guess I've done most things. American women aren't like your Spanish girls. I've done most things—in the last few years; but nothing was any good till I went to a corrida. I guess those twelve years had about taken the life out of me: given me anæmia—every sort of way. I couldn't *feel*—hell, you don't know what it's like, not to be able to feel—till I saw a corrida. Shall I tell you what it was like?' Bailarinito strangled a yawn above her bent head. 'I'll tell you what it was like. It was like coming alive after you've been dead—years. And when the bull hit the man—well, I guess, being a man, you don't know what it's like for a girl, the first time . . . Well, it was just like that!'

How she talked! The limitations of her Spanish vocabulary, and her use of the American-Castilian, defeated Bailarinito's Andaluz understanding for the most part. He grunted acquiescence; his left hand was folded up in a ridiculous bandage of lint, which he would remove as soon as he left her. This time, Bailarinito opened his mouth to its fullest extent and yawned openly. She swore at him for it, but good-humouredly, and Bailarinito laughed. There wasn't so much difference, after all, between her and the girls at the Casa de la Biscoche! If anything,

the latter were more refined. . . . One could be natural with her, as one never was natural with Pilár.

'I suppose the girl you were engaged to was pretty?'

'What's the good of a girl unless she's pretty?' countered Balarinito.

'I believe you're in love with her now!'

Balarinito swore resoundingly, and with unwonted truth, that this was not the case. She flattened herself against him.

'If you start anything again when we go back to Granada, I'll shoot you.'

'That would save some bull a bit of trouble,' agreed Balarinito.

'And you say she's living with your father now?'

'Just till she gets married; someone is sure to marry her,' said Balarinito easily.

'I'd like to meet her,' she persisted, with a woman's annoying curiosity about a rival. He shrugged his shoulders; he could not see Clarissa and Pilár together; the idea did not appeal to him, so he said, 'Of course; of course.' She became limp in his arms, chewing her under lip and obviously considering a new subject.

'I suppose I've got to meet your father some time?'

'That will be easy,' said Balarinito, without conviction.

She laughed.

'I suppose he's annoyed with you for getting married to me? What you matadors have got on us poor Americans, I can't think! Your manager's just wild with you because we're engaged, isn't he? It isn't as if I wasn't a Catholic! Well, whatever your father hands out to me, it can't be worse than the vanilla-ice hell my husband's family gave me before, and after, he was dead!' ended Clarissa.

In the flushed hour of his return from Almería, Balarinito was a hero to all Granada—with a single disconcerting exception. He was warmly clasped to his father's breast, the household swarmed about him, and the square filled itself with an interested mob—interested, no doubt, as much in the Hispano-Suiza in which he made his magnificent return as in Balarinito himself.



IN the rumour that Pepe Díaz was to marry a rich American, his previous shortcomings were forgotten; the grumbles of the real aficionados were muffled in the acclamation of his many admirers; that he had been under a cloud was forgotten in his present success. He had done pretty well at Almería, and the Press wrote of him as though he were Belmonte and Joselito rolled into one; nothing is easier than for a matador to buy a reputation—on paper. It is amazing how many are naïve enough to accept the journalistic encomiums; less amazing that the matadors themselves believe in them.

He returned with money to burn, with his novia installed at the Alhambra Palace Hotel—and apparently felt no embarrassment in meeting, under his father's roof, his discarded sweetheart. He greeted her off-handedly, in a brotherly and casual fashion which drove blood to the eyes and ears of Juan, who was present at their meeting.

His travelling-trunks were being carried in; he sat in the patio, shouting directions to Felipa; she was to see that such and such a thing went here and here—to show his man the various cupboards and drawers in which his belongings were to be bestowed. Yes, he now had a servant of his own, he explained, turning to Don José, with a proud smile which said that, in his own estimation at least, he was the equal of all the first-class matadors. Don José, as always, was only too ready to accept Pepe's valuation of himself.

'And I've a piece of news for you. What do you say to this? I'm fighting here, next Sunday: top of the bill. You wait and see! I'll show Granada something.'

'What arrangement is that?' asked Don José, astonished. 'I have heard nothing of it, and I was talking with Rodriguez yesterday.'

'Rodriguez doesn't know everything,' retorted Bailarinito grandly. 'This is a special, subsidized affair—Rodriguez will jump at it when he hears his miserable committee hasn't got to put its hands in its pockets. Clarissa is guaranteeing the expenses.'

Don José raised his eyes to heaven; that such a thing should be necessary as to guarantee the expenses of a bull-fight was to him but another proof of the decadence of the age. This cursed *futbol*, which was corrupting the taste of young Spain! And it was a disgrace that Granada, with two bull-rings, could not adequately support one.

'Is she an aficionada?' he enquired ironically. Bailarinito pulled down his lip, and made an expressive backwards-and-forwards movement with his right hand.

'She knows nothing; but she likes to see the bull hit the man! It seems a pity, as she is paying, that I shall have to disappoint her!' he grimaced. 'She is willing to put down a million pesetas, if necessary—she has very grand ideas, and it is important to her that I shall make a great position for myself quickly. You see? That is a woman of intelligence, who has her husband's interests always in the front of her mind. I did not need to point out to her that it was a disgraceful thing I have never had a chance of fighting in my native city since my banderillearing days.'

'You are crazy to fight again already,' said Don José suddenly. 'You have fought enough for this season; you will be as stale as old bread.'

'Eh? And Villalta? And Ortega? And Bienvenida? Do you suppose they're sending old bread to the Argentine?' Bailarinito's tone expressed his instant offence.

'You are not in such good form as they are; you have not been in good form all the season,' muttered Don José. Bailarinito instantly flared up.

'I had much to upset me. My mind was not at ease. It is impossible to do oneself justice when one is disturbed by private affairs. Besides, you are mad to suggest I stop fighting now,' grumbled Bailarinito. 'I missed my chance at Calatayud, but Vilchez thinks he will be able to fix me for Aranjuez. There is a month of the season yet to run, and, if I make a sensation here, I may yet be booked for half a dozen places.'

Don José bit his lip; suddenly his defences went down, and he thrust a hand across the table to his son.

'Listen, my son. It would not do for either of us if you were to make an indifferent show in Granada.'

'Who the hell says I'm likely to make an indifferent show? I tell you, everything has been different since I was as Malaga. I have *cartel* in Malaga; it is something to have *cartel* in Malaga; I was magnificent at Almerfa, and I have something up my sleeve that will make these Lalandistas open their eyes.' Bailarinito's tone was injured. 'After all, you have never seen me in the ring. You had only the papers to go upon, and I could not pay them enough. If you don't come to see me here, it will make a scandal.'

'Let it make ten thousand scandals,' roared Don José. 'I will not come to see you!'

'They will say you are staying away because you are afraid of seeing me make a fool of myself,' sulked Bailarinito. 'You know how Granada hangs on your opinions.'

The clumsy flattery, for once, did not register on Don José. He grunted.

'And you have changed your manager. You'd have done well to have stuck to Ramirez. He did well for me; he would have done well for you, on my account.'

'I dare say! But he's a back number—people aren't so keen on him as they used to be—he's not up to the modern ways of doing business. Vilchez is the man nowadays; I am pretty fortunate to get on his books. He made Ramonito; he says he can make me.'

Don José allowed a yellowed and bloodshot eye to explore his son's appearance. At Bailarinito's age his own eye had been as clear as the white of an egg; Pepe's was nearly as yellowed as his own, with the edges faintly reddened, as after a night of dissipation.

'*Madre de Dios!* And he starts by letting your vanity and your American destroy you!'

'Oh, if it pleases you to know it, Vilchez isn't any better pleased about Clarissa than you are; but he likes the colour of her money! Come: how many times have I fought this season? And if I'd gone to him sooner, Vilchez says he could have fixed

me up a fine season in Monte Video. However, that will do for another year. I'm in grand condition; that success in Malaga made a new man of me. You needn't stare at me like that, father. I certainly made a night of it last night, after the corrida—some of Clarissa's rich friends came over from Malaga, and we had a good deal to drink; but I've got a week before me to get over it in.'

'Whose are the bulls?' muttered Don José. 'It is too late for good bulls. You will look well if you find yourself in the ring with bulls that come up to eat out of your hand.'

Bailarinito spat across the room. The knowledge that his father boasted about him and extolled his prowess in public did not compensate for this private carping, which Bailarinito felt to be both unjust and untimely. Here he was at last, on the crest of the wave, and his father could do nothing but croak like an old magpie in a cage. He was ruffled; he would go upstairs and bully his servant.

On the landing he met Pilár. Her eyes met his calmly; she was in her toquilla, either going to, or returning from, church. She would be! Bailarinito's vanity pricked him a little; it struck him as a poor tribute to himself that Pilár should be able to meet him with so unruffled a countenance. He caught clownishly at her hand.

'Well?' he said. 'Things are much better as they are, aren't they?'

She did not shrink, or betray any sign of emotion, or attempt to loosen her hand from his impudent clasp.

'If you are content, I am the same,' she answered.

'You never wanted to marry me!' he flung at her peevishly. 'Let me tell you there were plenty of girls who would have leapt at the chance. And they wouldn't have tried to trick me into it the way you did.'

This brutal remark brought the blood to her forehead.

'I hoped you had forgiven me for that,' she whispered.

Bailarinito, appeased, laughed loudly.

'We needn't say any more about that. You're a bit too good

for a matador's wife, aren't you?' he said patronizingly. 'I'll tell you what you'd better do; you had better fall in love with Juan, he's much more your sort; I dare say you will be able to make a little tame rabbit of him, that will eat out of your hand without once biting your fingers. A singing rabbit!' At his own graceless jest, he laughed again, released Pilár's fingers, and went along the gallery, passing, as he did so, the half-open door of Juan's room.

'*Ola, niño!*' The old greeting did not bring Juan leaping to his side, as in other days; a languid head was raised indifferently from the writing with which Juan was occupied, a pair of eyes of inscrutable darkness met for a moment, and then evaded, the bold and corrupt eyes of Pepe. '*Jesú-Maria-Josef!*' The latter went swaggering into the room. 'What have you been doing with yourself? You look a regular *señorito!*'

With a careless and patronizing affection, Bailarinito flung his arm about his brother, and felt Juan stiffen. So unwonted a reception of his caress stung him with astonishment. Juan's head again sank to his work, and Bailarinito, unable to endure such an attitude of indifference to his blandishments, spun a couple of duros on the table under his brother's nose. 'Come! Let's see you spend that. I am going to the café; come along and show me how much of a man you've grown into.'

Juan slowly drew his papers from under the big silver pieces without touching them.

'I don't want your money, Bailarinito.'

'Eh?'

'Give it to a beggar,' burst out Juan violently. 'Or—throw it into the Darro! Get rid of it—get rid of it!'

'*Dio' mio*, I'm getting rid of it all right!' grinned Bailarinito, with a slightly rueful recollection of the disbursements he had made during the last few hours. 'There's not a beggar in Granada who hasn't had a week's keep out of me already. What's the matter? Why do you look at me so crazily?'

'I was thinking,' said Juan, with a wild look, 'how much I used to love you!'

'Eh?'

'When it seemed the most wonderful thing in the world to be allowed to walk down to the café with you; for you to buy me almonds, and those jasmine flowers mounted on straws, and let me sit and listen while you talked with your friends. My love for you was so real in those days that sometimes I felt it like a burden; but it was a burden that I liked to carry. For I did love you, Bailarinito; not in the way I loved Miguel, which was a special thing. But I loved your strength, and the way that, though you were often rough, you were always kind to me. Even your teasing was kind: I suppose because I was weak and small, and you were too grand to hurt someone so much feebler than yourself. And I used to collect the looks people gave you, the things they said, and the way they nudged one another when you went by, and said: "There's the son of El Bailarín"; "He's going to be as fine as El Bailarín some day"—I loved all those things; they made me so proud of you, I used to feel as if I'd burst. It's over. It's finished. I don't feel like that any more.'

'But you are indeed crazy!' protested the astonished Bailarinito. 'You've done too much reading—you're poisoned with printer's ink! If you come out with me now——. There are people who are ready to go on their knees to me all over Granada! El Bailarín can't have had more fuss made over him than they're making about me just now. All the snobs in Granada are crazy to meet me! You're missing it all, with your nose stuck in a book.' His ignorant affection for Juan broke out again in a rough caress. 'Come out——'

'Don't *touch* me!' Juan shuddered, and crouched unmistakably away from his brother's hand.

Bailarinito stood, frowning, deeply offended, fingering in his perturbation the pearl cuff-links which his novia had bought him that morning in the Zacatin.

The wholly unconscious movement drew Juan's attention, and suddenly his face burned like a thin flame. Leaping to his feet, he pointed with a shaking hand to the pearls, to the diamond pin in Bailarinito's tie.

'It was for those things you betrayed Pilár! You have betrayed

her as our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed! And for that I curse you—I curse my own brother!’

As Juan fell sobbing across the table, Bailarinito stood rooted to the spot. All the superstition of his profession rose in a wave within him; his blood turned to ice. Muttering something, he hastily signed himself with the cross, and hurried from the room. He would have to get very drunk to forget Juan’s words. He would need all Clarissa’s scepticism to persuade him that they were but words, and powerless to affect him.

The meeting which took place between those two hard-boiled individuals, Don José Díaz Marquez and Mrs. Clarissa Kapp van Dongen, was not a success. It took place towards the end of the week, when Bailarinito had sufficiently recovered his poise to convey to his father the message that Clarissa would be very pleased if he would dine with them at the Alhambra Palace.

‘It would have looked better if he’d invited me first,’ pouted Clarissa.

‘You don’t know my father—yet,’ said Bailarinito: thinking the chances were about a million to one against Clarissa’s ever knowing Don José. ‘He’s very odd about some things—having strangers to the house; especially foreigners. He’d say the house was not properly equipped for entertaining people——’

‘Hell, Bailarinito, what sort of a hovel do you live in?’ asked Clarissa, laughing; but Bailarinito’s sense of humour was not equal to the reception of this kind of joke, and she had to spend some time in pacifying him before their conversation could continue. ‘Well, what the devil do you think I should care what sort of place you came from?’ she pointed out, when peace was established. ‘I’ve been told lots of the big matadors come right out of the gutter—if they haven’t been waiters at some time or other! I’d marry you if you were a gipsy. Come on now; let’s hear how that English of yours is getting on: say, “I love you.”’

‘*Tay lav ju,*’ said Bailarinito inanely.

Don José was silent, morose, imperturbable and grand. Clarissa, who was not to be intimidated by the silences of an ex-matador, but who, deprived temporarily of her chaise-longue (their pre-

liminary meeting took place in the lounge), was a little less than herself, was edgy, and forgot to emphasize that side of herself that would most have recommended her to the cynic in her future father-in-law.

If she had plastered herself with jewels—she had enough—and got herself up as for a presentation at Court, she might have cut some ice. It was stupid of her to imagine that Don José's sophistication would rise to appreciation of a drab chiffon, by Molyneux, with which, for some freak, she had chosen to wear not so much as a single diamond or a pearl. She had been irritated by her maid, and her make-up was not so successful as usual. She had made the devastating discovery, just before she came down, that, in order to produce that inimitable line at the back of the head, the marvellous Spanish *coiffeur* had been cutting chunks out of her hair. Spanish *coiffeurs* have no conscience in such matters.

She forgot to make the most of the fact that she was financing the corrida on Sunday; she was absent-minded, a little fuddled, and looked—unjustly—as though she had been drinking.

And she was brought almost to screaming pitch by having to sit, gulping her wine, while the two men went solemnly, and for the most part silently, through the interminable course of the dinner. The sensation their party caused in the dining-room by no means made up to her for the strain on her nerves; Clarissa had had her share of causing a sensation, and had lost interest in it.

At the end of an apparent eternity, the men lighted their cigars. Clarissa made up her mind.

'I'm going to take your father to my sitting-room, Pepe; you'll wait down here, *querido*?'

For the first time for many years, Don José found himself in the boudoir of a woman of society. It was by courtesy that the room to which he was taken was called a sitting-room: it was the room communicating with her bedroom, and held, mainly, a large wardrobe and the chaise-longue. Don José sat down, stiffly, upon an opposite chair; he had no evening clothes—it was



a foreign fashion to which he had never succumbed—but he was scrupulously dressed in black, and the omission did not worry him. He had not known whether to be irritated or gratified by the sight of Pepe, rigged out like an English tourist, or—here he unwittingly followed Clarissa—a camerero.

She drifted about with her back to him; he had plenty of opportunity to appraise a scrupulously whitened spinal column, and hips that owed less than they might have done to the *corsetière*. With the van Dongen fortune, a woman can afford to keep her looks and her figure until she is well over fifty; Clarissa had not travelled so far as yet, but she had kept hers. To his indifferent eye, she looked about thirty.

She lit a cigarette, and, still without speaking, stretched herself among the cushions of the chaise-longue. She clasped her hands under the nape of her neck, and arched her torso; Don José—whose experience she did not underrate—should have the opportunity of seeing that Bailarinito was not getting a sack of duros and nothing else. Don José betrayed by no flicker of the eyelid what his opinion might be; her lips stretched into an irrepressible grin on her cigarette-holder; Bailarinito's father was, beyond question, more exciting than Bailarinito.

'I guess this competition in who'll speak first has gone on long enough. I'll give it to you.' She remembered he knew no English, and called up her Spanish to her aid. 'Come here; I cannot talk while are so far away.'

He seated himself so imperturbably upon the foot of the chaise-longue that her vanity was piqued. Had he no blood in him? Or was that *ylang* perfume not all they claimed for it? It seemed to have its effects on Bailarinito. Then she remembered; these Spaniards—matadors especially—were done for long before they were forty. It was a pity; she gave a sharp little sigh, and jerked down the shade of a reading lamp, which threw too direct a light upon the complexion which was not, perhaps, so bad after all.

'Why are you so annoyed I'm marrying Bailarinito?'

Don José, totally unaccustomed to such direct attack, loathing

it, and her for making such a parade of her sex in front of him—as if a man at his time of life could not get as much of that as he wanted without going to his son's novia for it!—spread out his hands, and said he was not annoyed.

'Oh, yes, you are. All Bailarinito's matador chums are mad about it, and I'm not such a fool as to imagine you're pleased. Now what's it all about? Am I not good enough for Bailarinito, or what is it?'

Don José replied, very stiffly, that it was a matter of nationality; that foreigners could not be expected to understand the Spanish temperament, particularly the bull-fighter temperament; and, being pressed, admitted that he feared the effect upon Pepe's career, of so bizarre a marriage.

'*Carramba!*' said Clarissa. 'To hear you talk, one would think that bull-fighters weren't like ordinary human beings; that they were blue angels, or something of that sort. Why, we've got a matador of our own: Sidney Franklin. It doesn't look as if Spain can stake out a claim to have the monopoly of the bull-fighter temperament.'

Don José replied, as any Spaniard would have replied, that Sidney Franklin was very brave, but that he had not the advantage of the Spanish temperament. Clarissa, who did not really know what she was talking about, decided to let this go. She would have to be more drunk than she was to support an argument in favour of American bull-fighters against Don José. Besides, her Spanish would not stand it.

'Well, there's my money. All bull-fighters need money. Or don't you think that's enough? Don't you think I'm personally attractive?'

Don José's eye travelled slowly down her figure, and returned to Clarissa van Dongen's face. To her intense surprise, she found herself blushing under the maquillage. That was the limit! Supposing the stuff came off! She had never in her life been looked at in such a fashion: her neurotic, over-sexed body cringed beneath the look, as though Don José's hand had stroked it. She suddenly had a violent desire to make him make love to her; but

that might not do; you never knew how Spaniards would take these things. They were so oncoming in some ways, so sticky in others. Bailarinito was just a rotter, of course; he'd make love to any woman, at any time, if she had money. Clarissa had no illusions about him; she suddenly found herself wanting to cry because she had no illusions about him. She was just crazy about him, that was all; so crazy that she had to buy her craze, to keep it for her own.

The mingled emotions in her brain had the strange effect of bringing a look upon her face which was both youthful and tender. The old, unregenerate sex response stirred in Don José. She was rich, good-looking, and her figure was elegant; Bailarinito might be doing not so badly, after all. If he would only have the sense to make her his mistress instead of marrying her! Then, if things went wrong, he could get rid of her. If they were married, divorce would be the only thing, and divorce was not a simple matter for a Catholic. It would do Pepe no good, either. And, for himself, Don José knew how deeply he would resent a divorce in the family.

He would talk to Pepe, he decided, while he was paying her the compliments—half ironic—that she asked for. Let Pepe get her as his mistress, and make hay while the sun shone. Don José knew that he could have managed it; why, the woman was ready to throw herself into his arms now! That was a nice sort for Bailarinito to marry! Heaven knew what she would be up to while he was away on his tours.

Clarissa, half hypnotized, was pushing her advantage. She let her hand lie, as though by accident, close to Don José's; it quivered with the desire that he should take it. But Don José, although continuing to pay her compliments, did not take it. Like many men of his type, he had no idea of beginning a flirtation which did not sweep to its—from his point of view—logical conclusion. If he touched her, he would end by sleeping with her; that was as plain as the very good nose on Clarissa's face. She was ready for it: she was the kind that could love one man and sleep with another—a convenient frame of mind, if one was in

the mood and had no other entanglements. Don José allowed his eyes to slip, with a glance that was an insult, to Clarissa's breasts. She might as well ask him to possess her point-blank as to move and look as she was doing now. An easy and infamous way to deliver Pepe from her bondage came to him; Clarissa might be willing to share her favours between the pair of them, but there would be no question of Balarinito's complacency if he discovered that he had a rival in his father. Whether or not he loved Clarissa that would certainly mutilate his pride.

It was characteristic of Don José that he could contemplate such a course of action in cold blood, and not feel that it cast the faintest shadow upon his relations with Pilár. It was a thing apart: a piece of business, as separate from his life and love as his negotiations with the Ayuntamiento. If he could display Clarissa to Balarinito as a thing totally unreliable and worthless, the latter would surely find some way of escaping from the marriage contract without actually forfeiting the privilege of putting his hand in Clarissa's pocket.

Clarissa was excited, but not so much so as to lose her head completely. Her sexual awareness told her that she, as a woman, had succeeded in captivating the man in Don José. His cold, personal animosity, which had been so marked during dinner, had given way—albeit unwillingly—to her personal charm. He might still disapprove of her as a wife for Balarinito, but she excited him, as he excited her. He had arrived at the point of allowing himself to indulge lascivious thoughts about her; this gave her—or so she thought—an enormous advantage over him.

'How fortunate I am to be marrying into such an illustrious family!' she managed to say, in tolerably good Spanish. He received this, as he received all compliments, with a seigniorial movement of the head. His grandeur a little upset Clarissa, who got up and crossed the room hurriedly. She splashed whiskey into two glasses, and brought them back with her. He accepted his gravely; it amused him to allow himself to be seduced—a little—by a woman of Clarissa's type, after so many years.

'See here,' she said presently. 'Pepe's sore about you not com-

ing to the corrida on Sunday.' He made a gesture of refusal. 'I'm a little sore myself.'

'Why?' enquired Don José blandly. As she made no immediate reply, he continued, 'I never go to see Pepe fight. This occasion is no different from the rest.'

'Yes, it is; I'm guaranteeing the expenses—and you're a very influential man in Granada.'

'That is quite true,' responded Don José.

'Well, it doesn't look very polite towards me, does it?'

Don José signified, with very expressive synchronization of hand-and-shoulder movement, that the two points had no connection; that no one would connect them for a moment; that his habits were as well known as his opinions; that his sense of gratitude and obligation to Clarissa was in no way affected by his actions.

'I don't get the whole of that,' said Clarissa. 'But it strikes me you owe me something for all I'm doing for Pepe, and it's not treating me properly to give me a smack in the face in front of the whole of Granada by not turning up at the corrida.'

'I have explained——' began Don José quietly.

'Pepe thinks the same as I do. He wants you to be there.'

'Pepe knows my customs——' said Don José, in genuine astonishment.

'So he says. All the same, he wants you to be there. He's sore about your not coming. He's more than sore. I guess he's a little frightened.'

'*Qué?*' said Don José sharply.

She repeated herself carefully; the literal translation was probably all wrong in Spanish; she did not care. He got what she meant.

'It looks like matadors are the most superstitious creatures on God's earth. It seems Pepe's had some quarrel with his brother Juan, and Pepe's got it into his head it's put the jinx—*ojo malo*—on his performance on Sunday.'

'Pepe and Juan have quarrelled?'

'That's what I've got out of him.'

'But what has that got to do with the corrida?'

'I'll buy that. I mean, I don't understand; but Pepe seems to think you can keep off the evil spirits—or whatever it is. He's nothing but a big baby over the whole thing. I've told him so.'

'What did they quarrel about?' asked Don José loudly; he was irritated past endurance by the woman's babblings about a thing she could not understand.

'God knows! But it's put the wind up Pepe. I mean, he's scared stiff. I must say I don't fancy the idea of putting up all that money for Pepe to make a fool of himself in the ring, because he thinks Juan's ill-wished him or something.'

Across Don José's face slipped the cold, intolerable mask of the matador; if he had been wearing a hat, he would have tilted it forward; if he had been smoking a cigar, it would have stood up at an angle towards his hat-brim. His eyes almost closed; he looked at Clarissa from the corners of them.

'What are you saying? You do not know my sons.'

'Don't get sore with me.' Clarissa's hand shot out suddenly and lay upon the back of his. God, how marvellous he was! A man who could look at one like that, as if one were something from under a stone, was worth something. Already her feet were hesitating upon the fatal path, which all El Bailarín's women had followed, that led them down to their hell of ignominy. She leaned towards him, giving him all the practised coquetry of her eyes. 'We understand one another; there's nothing for us to quarrel about. You aren't going to try to interfere with our marriage, are you?' she purred.

'Why should I?' A dirty smile slid up the side of Don José's face. 'It is evident you are *simpatica*, beautiful, and devoted to the interests of Pepe—who is old enough to think for himself.'

'And I can buy him all he wants,' she persisted, smiling.

'You could do that without getting married to him,' pointed out Don José. Her expression became mulish.

'I dare say. But I don't mean to.'

'A matador's mistress usually has a better time than his wife,' said Don José cynically. 'But you have no doubt thought of the

matter from all points of view. You may even have thought—that Pepe is not likely to satisfy you for a long time.'

Her eyes met his with a startled expression in them. She tightened her clasp on his hand.

'You'll come to the bull-fight?'

He made an evasive movement with his free hand.

'I will think about it.'

Pepe was sulkily trying to make out the jokes in the English and American papers when they descended to the lounge. Somewhat to Don José's surprise, he did not remain behind with Clarissa. They made their adieux and left the hotel. Curious eyes followed them, from the tables outside the little beer kiosk on the left, as they walked across the façade of the British Vice-Consulate, crossed the tram-lines, and proceeded down the water-echoing Alameda.

'What did she want you for?'

'One never knows what a woman wants.'

'Well? And now you've met her——?'

'*Muy bien*. My American dressed better.'

A heavy silence lay upon each: their footsteps crunched the earth; the streams babbled in their ears.

Near the foot of the Calle de Goméres they turned aside into the broken tangle of streets that gave them a short cut to the heart of the town. There was a flamenco concert at the teatro Isabella la Católica; the foot of the street was spanned by a string of electric lights. Up at the top of the hill, near the theatre itself, there was shouting and confusion: people were running up the hill, among them a detachment of the Civil Guard, with their muskets in their hands.

'Reds,' said Bailarinito laconically. 'The Communists said they were going to break into the concert to-night and hold a meeting of their own; of course no one believed them; there you are!'

Don José made a noise of anger and contempt, and turned sharply to his right. Bailarinito looked towards the mob, wondered if it would be worth while strolling up to see what was going on, yawned, and decided for bed.

The Communists had no luck at the teatro Isabella la Católica; the loyalists, enraged at having their concert interrupted, flung them out; a few were arrested; others, feeling discretion to be the better part of valour, casually mingled with the crowd, and drifted later to the wine-shops; dual shadows appeared in the pink lamp-lit interiors of the Calle de las Moras; an unsuspecting taxi-driver, new to his job and to Granada, drove a stranger up to the gipsy quarter.



## Nineteen

**A**BANDONING finesse, Don Alonso Quintero called upon Don José and asked him point-blank if he intended buying Aguadero. If he had no intention of doing so, said Don Alonso, he had some thoughts of purchasing it himself, although the price was higher than he really cared to give.

Don José's eyes opened widely upon this announcement.

'You buy Aguadero, Alonso? You buy a house of that size to live in by yourself? *Madre de Dios*, what does one solitary man like you want with all those rooms, all that garden—not to speak of the staff you will have to employ to keep it in order?'

'It is rather a large place for myself alone,' acquiesced Don Alonso, wagging his head, and looking slyly at Don José.

'Rather large! Why, man, it is a wilderness. And it is not as though you have children to inherit it when you are gone.' Don José smiled as deceitfully as his vis-à-vis. 'Come, come, Alonso; you cannot expect to jump me into buying a property I am not anxious for by threatening to buy it yourself!'

'I am not the only person who is after it,' stated Don Alonso. 'The Bolivars have their eye on it, and I heard the other day of some people from Malaga who had been over to look at it. From them, naturally, Raimundo would expect a great deal more money; but to yourself or me he would make a very reasonable offer.'

'And what is this reasonable offer?' sneered Don José, who was well aware that Don Alonso would have his picking out of any bone that was offered to him.

Don Alonso named the price, which was, indeed, several thousand pesetas more than Don José had imagined, from Don Alonso's cajoling words, it was likely to be. Yet, as he thought of it and thought of the money, and as the thought of Pilár slid into his mind tremulously, like a shy fawn, and was chased thence by his own extreme self-consciousness of his love for her, a new and urgent greed took possession of him. A greed so vast that it overwhelmed everything save his desire to possess Aguadero. Let Pepe once get married, and Don José's money was at his own disposal. During his silence, Don Alonso struck in, speaking as though to himself, but aloud, so that Don José might hear:

'It would be, as you say, a big house for a man to occupy all by himself. But is it out of the question that I shall make changes in my way of living which would make it imperative for me to live in a larger way than I have been doing up to the present? Is it absurd to think that I might, for example, marry again, and rear a family among the vineyards of Aguadero?'

'What do you say?' shouted Don José. Don Alonso smiled deprecatingly.

'Permit me to hope you do not see anything ridiculous in the idea of my re-marriage,' he answered, with false humility. 'As a man gets on in years the celibate state does not appear more agreeable to him.'

'Who is it?' demanded Don José.

'I leave you to guess,' said Don Alonso modestly.

'Is it Carmen Morales, the jeweller's daughter?' The veins were standing out on Don José's temples.

'Do you see me marrying into a family that is rotten with tuberculosis?' retorted Don Alonso. 'No, try again.'

'The widow of Estebán Villeguas,' muttered Don José, with his heart thudding against his breastbone. To be forced into this diabolical game of guess-work by Don Alonso!

'The banking-account of Clara Villeguas is safe, so far as I am concerned,' declared Don Alonso. 'One doesn't look for fruit from an old tree. I spoke of a family, did I not? The woman I have chosen——'

'I will take Aguadero!' gasped Don José; the sweat was rolling down his face in great drops; he spoke through his teeth as a man may do in great physical pain.

Don Alonso jumped up and wrung his friend's hand.

'Now that is excellent! I congratulate you. I should have thought the less of your common sense if you had refused it,' he cried frankly. 'Raimundo will be as pleased as I am myself. . . . You have not yet given me your felicitations.' He had picked up his hat, and his short, dandyish figure braced itself to its accustomed jauntiness. 'You will, I hope, wish me well upon my marriage to Consuelo de Ribera?'

Don José heard his own voice gasp something; realized, as he sat alone, panting and mopping his brow, that he had been put through a quarter of an hour of the most exquisite agony, wondering if it had been a deliberate trick on Don Alonso's part, and rejecting the suspicion in the light of Alonso's genial temperament and genuine affection for himself. But it was brought home to him plainly that he must not delay much longer in asking Pilár to marry him, because by delaying he subjected himself to such horrible suspicions and anxieties that his life would not be worth living unless his doubts were resolved.

At the present moment he was so filled with relief that he could have rushed after Don Alonso, embraced him, kissed him, made some rash, resplendent offer of a wedding-gift, committed the most inane and outrageous follies to celebrate his lightness of heart. In the mirror, restored to its old position because for very shame he could not risk others besides Felipa becoming aware of his weakness, he caught sight of his own face with a foolish smile upon it.

He went up eagerly, closely, to examine it. Time, he decided, had not treated him badly; if he did not look young, neither did he look an old man. Shoulders squared, hand on hip, he still presented an impressive figure. Blinded, like many a man in his position, to perception of the ridiculous, Don José tried a variety of expressions upon his face: severity, scorn, sweetness, and fascination. They were all there, at his command, like attendant

sprites waiting upon their master! They stiffened his self-confidence, enabled him, momentarily at least, to dismiss his fears of Juan.

There was another matter too, to which lately he had clung in his agony of apprehension regarding his own sentiments towards Pilár. It had appeared to him, for long, atrocious that he could commit the blasphemy against her saintliness and purity of imagining them joined in marriage. The girl's abnormal innocence, her religiousness and virtue, had for long appalled him, until he remembered the single thing that, for him, made her human in spite of her angelic qualities. She had, in connivance with her grandmother, deliberately deceived him! The mere recollection of this one lapse of hers comforted him beyond expression. This one flaw redeemed her from an impossible perfection which would surely have frozen his aspirations towards making her his wife. Instead of being chilled by the thought of that deception, Don José, himself master of duplicity, fixed upon this very thing as the prime object of his love. It contributed to her mysterious personality at least one element which he could perfectly understand, with which he was at home. Because of this his own burden of guilt and shame was lightened, and he was so much emboldened by it that he had made up his mind, not only to marry her, but upon the very place and time when his proposal to her should take place.

As his normal state of mind reasserted itself, he realized that in his interview with Don Alonso he had now committed himself to a purchase which would be out of the question unless the burden of Pepe's maintenance was lifted wholly from his shoulders. His brows knit themselves in a relentless decision. Well, let it be so. From henceforth he would do nothing, nothing at all, to interfere between Pepe and Clarissa. It was equivalent to a desertion of his son. Well, how many times had Pepe deserted him? In his dealings with every living creature save Pepe, his own will, his own desires, had come first; only for Pepe had he made sacrifices, and the result amply confirmed his conviction that anyone who sacrificed himself for another was a fool.

He would have another serious talk with Pepe, representing to him that when he was married he would become, so far as his father was concerned, wholly dependent upon Clarissa's bounty, and therefore obliged to exercise discretion in the conduct of his life, both in and outside the casa. Her money would not come automatically into his hands, as would have been the case if he had married a Spanish wife; but she had agreed to make a generous settlement upon him. If, however, at any time she should be brought to petition for divorce, and it was well known how lightly Americans regarded the divorce, all other moneys would vanish, and he would be nearly as badly off as he was at present. The thing for the moment was to conciliate Clarissa, and, as a step towards that end, Don José now decided to go to the corrida.

Apart from a certain mental oppression, Bailarinito was feeling good. He had made up his mind to have a great success in Granada, and, in spite of the temptations presented by Clarissa's presence, was taking care of himself in view of Sunday; going to bed early—for him—and rising each morning to take a brisk walk up the Generalife. On his return from his exercise he was massaged by his sword-handler, and then usually had an hour's sleep, after which he joined Clarissa at the hotel, but managed by superhuman self-control to refuse alcohol and to smoke only in moderation. He was obliged to admit that even four days of this régime had made a vast difference to his condition.

He felt good. There could be no doubt he was in for a magnificent exito on Sunday. He had managed to get together a very good cuadrilla—dismissing one of his banderilleros, a disloyal, undependable fellow, and replacing him by a local fighter with a very good provincial reputation.

It was annoying that Juan's burst of ill-temper should remain in the back of his mind, buzzing like a wasp caught under glass, and disturbing his serenity. They had all been used, from Juan's infancy, to his outbursts of fury over trivial matters—which had been regarded rather as a joke than otherwise. But this outburst

derived some new kind of importance from Juan's maturity, which was very marked since his return from Sanpedro, and a curse is a curse, however you may look at it.

Bailarinito did not for a moment mistake its import. Juan had obviously fallen in love with Pilár—that might be a joke in other circumstances!—and took it upon himself to resent his elder brother's treatment of his mistress. A piece of youthful romantic nonsense. If he could have got hold of the elusive Juan, who avoided him like the plague and even went the length of locking his door at night as though he anticipated some such overture from his brother, Bailarinito would have tried to make it plain that Pilár was as much relieved as himself by the way things had fallen out.

'So there is trouble between you and Juan.'

At his father's words Bailarinito started. A curious, habitual loyalty had always governed Pepe and Miguel in their dealings with the little brother. Although he and Miguel thought nothing of betraying each other, they had tacitly evolved a system of loyalty to the young Juan, who was so much less capable of looking after himself than either of them was. Miguel's loyalty was solid as a rock; Pepe's had been known to depend upon expediency. In the present instance he could not see that he had anything to lose by shielding the crazy boy from his father's anger. The thing was silly and harmless and youthful; Juan was old enough to start thinking about girls, and, being Juan, he would take the fever in some exaggerated form which Don José could not be expected to understand any better than he, Bailarinito, understood it.

'Oh, the *niño* has some spider in his ceiling. It is nothing. Probably his rhymes are curdling, and they've upset his stomach!' he returned, with airy scorn for Juan's accomplishments.

'So long as it does not upset yours,' said Don José, with a suspicious look. 'A man's stomach needs to be in order, as well as his muscles, if he is going to kill bulls.'

'I don't take any notice of what Juan says!'

'He is very young,' nodded Don José. 'He does not realize

how young he is. He is too young to know how to manage his own brains. Don Antonio does not keep him hard enough at his studies. . . . I have been thinking,' said Don José, 'of coming to the bulls on Sunday. There is something in what you say: that for me to be absent would create a false impression. It is always a mistake to do that.'

'That's good,' said Bailarinito, resting his arm on Don José's shoulder with careless affection, and smiling down into his face. 'I'm glad you've seen it wouldn't look very good for me if my own father did not come to see me fight in Granada. This place is as bad as a village for gossip.' He added with a laugh, 'Why not make a family party of it? All come; you and Juan and the women? That would make a real occasion of it.'

Don José, fighting his own superstitions, had the same thought in his mind as Bailarinito. That will show Juan I'm not afraid of his curse, thought the latter; to worry over curses is to be as superstitious as a gipsy. And Don José: Am I to behave like a Gallo? If I do not go to see Pepe kill bulls, Granada will buzz like a humming-top. Actually his heart leapt at the prospect, so long delayed, of seeing his son in a formal corrida. He nodded slowly to Bailarinito's proposal.

'I will see about it.' He cast a sharp look at Bailarinito's sweat-soaked shirt. 'Go upstairs and get your things off; I will come up and sit with you while Pio massages you. I have something to tell you.' He suddenly knew that he must have Pepe's approbation of the Aguadero scheme. In the end, Aguadero would come to Pepe, and the prospect of such an inheritance might do something to adjust the balance of his wild and ill-regulated life.

'What?' grunted Bailarinito, prone under Pio's handling. 'You're going to buy a country property? Why, in the name of all the saints, when no one knows what the Government's going to do next? And if the Communists get in——'

'The Communists will not get in,' said Don José coldly. 'We have learnt our lesson. At the next election the Monarchists will get in in full force, and land will increase in value. Aguadero is a very handsome property.'

'Are you going to live there?'

'*Madre de Dios*, why else should I be buying it?'

'What? Leave all your cronies of the Alameda and the clubs?'

'There comes a time,' said Don José sententiously, 'when a man no longer takes the pleasure he formerly did in the life outside the casa.'

Pío relinquishing his hold for a moment, Bailarinito twisted over and stared into his father's face. Suddenly his own handsome unintelligent features broke up into laughter.

'*Por Dios*, father! I believe *you're* going to get married!'

'And if I were,' cried Don José, crimsoning at Bailarinito's brainless mirth, 'is there anything grotesque about that? Would it be thought unreasonable that a man should seek, in the latter years of his life, when his children are grown up and have left him, some comfort, some domesticity, of the kind that only marriage can provide?'

'I don't know,' muttered Bailarinito, slightly ashamed of himself, and lying down on his face again. 'You have Felipa,' he mumbled into the pillow. It was the first time any of his sons had revealed to Don José their knowledge of his domestic situation.

Instead of being enraged, as he might well have been, Bailarinito's thoughtless reception of his information cut Don José to the heart. He was, God knew, squeamish enough about buying Aguadero; he had badly wanted a little enthusiasm from Pepe to bolster up his own intentions. And, conjured by Pepe's laughter, the whole of his own corrupt experience, his age, his depleted physical vigour, and his cynicism rose to confront the sacred and mystical vision of Pilár in her youthful purity; confidence once more deserted him, and he saw what he proposed to do as an act of desecration which should bring upon him the scorn of those whose good opinion he valued. His soul shed tears of blood.

Sunday morning dawned with a clear, cool sky and some breeze, which now and then freshened into a dust-carrying squall and as quickly abated. These not unpleasant atmospheric conditions are not ideal for the bull-fight, which demands a torrid



afternoon, a sun like an orange, and perhaps a thunderstorm growling in the distance. Both as a spectacle and psychologically, the bull-fight benefits from such conditions; the emotional *tempo* is quickened, the bull's rushes gather a new significance from the heat, the matadors appear to dance upon a plate of quivering red-hot metal, a new conception of hell is born in the minds of the more imaginative spectators, and the historic tragedy of the fight itself soars to its climax upon a wave of emotionalism which is partly generated from the weather conditions.

It had rained in the night, and this meant that the sand in the ring would be heavy; the treacherous little wind would necessitate working with damp capes, which limits much of the grace and style of the torero's work. Against these disadvantages, of which Bailarinito became aware as soon as he opened his eyes, lay the fact that his head picador had come from the corrals bringing the news that the bulls were good, on the heavy side—there was one beast the size of a post office, but Ramonito had drawn him—but without too much horn, and the majority between four and five years old. They came from Villamarta's ganadería.

Bailarinito had entered into that state of detachment which all bull-fighters enter before a fight, and from which many of them, particularly the older ones, never emerge at all; as though their close acquaintance with death disposes them a little to see men as trees walking; as though some sense of the capriciousness of the fate that governs them makes it not worth their while to establish contacts with a world they may be called upon to relinquish at any moment. Bailarinito was too heedless and too lacking in imagination to live in this detached frame of mind; but before, during, and for a little while after a fight he passed into it, as a man may pass deeper and yet deeper into anæsthesia during an operation which is likely to be fatal.

The mood lay strongly upon him as he dressed; presently he went out quietly, and took his solitary walk up the Generalife. He was surprised, at so early an hour, presently to hear footsteps behind him; more surprised, when he turned round, to see that

it was Juan. A flicker of gratification was succeeded by a spasm of anger. That Juan should dare, in his present mind, to intrude his presence upon him was an outrage. Bailarinito waited, cold and remote, until his brother caught up with him.

'What do you want? I don't want your company.'

'That that I said to you the other day——' stammered Juan. 'I wanted to tell you—I didn't mean it.'

In his new, terrible remoteness, which lent him a dignity that ordinarily did not belong to him, Bailarinito stared coldly over Juan's head; he could feel himself, thanks to this encounter, passing into the jumpy from the quiet stage. Ten hours of the jumps! That would be a nice thing to have to endure! Like almost every matador, Bailarinito was as watchful of himself, on the day of a fight, as a neurotic woman.

'You don't suppose I took any notice of you, you fool?' he sneered, and spun round on his heel.

'Bailarinito! At least say you forgive me!' cried Juan, in an agonized voice.

'What do you want with my forgiveness?' came across the other's shoulder. Instead of maintaining his smooth, springy walk, Bailarinito was now practically rushing headlong up the hill. Juan, panting for breath, kept pace, a little behind him.

'You are my brother! It is impossible for me to wish evil to come to you. Tell me at least you have forgotten it!'

'Get to the devil away from me!' shouted Bailarinito, turning round as though to strike Juan; the latter flinched. 'I have told you I take no notice of you. Isn't that enough for you?' He sprang up the small red path that leads up among the prickly pears, away from the main road; leaving Juan below.

The cool air from the mountains beat into his face and presently calmed him. He did not ordinarily pay much attention to the familiar scene, but this morning, and, as it were, from the depths of his ensorcelled condition which the meeting with Juan had so rudely disturbed, it came to him that everything looked very clear and clean, that the green of the trees was particularly frail and translucent, that the olives and cypresses had

a kind of painted delicacy he had not noticed before, and that he would be sorry not to see the palace of the Generalife again. Even to-morrow morning, after the fight was over and he was entitled to relax his régime, it would be worth while to walk up the hill and look at them. He gave a little laugh; it was unlikely that he would do anything of the kind. Clarissa would claim her reward for the last week's complaisance.

Juan wandered once more blindly down the hill. The effort he had made to put matters right between himself and Bailarinito had failed.

The fact that he had cursed his brother had been hanging like a black cloud upon his horizon. The blaze of his hate having died down, there remained in its place a curious stale indifference, only disturbed by the recollection of the scene with Bailarinito and its ugly climax.

It had been exactly as though someone had placed a deadly weapon in his hands and he had used it without stopping to consider the consequence. Then his dread had become that some diabolical force would put the curse to work, and that his brother would come to actual harm through him.

How many times during those anxious days had he invoked the spirit of Miguel, his hardy scepticism, which would have scoffed such fears out of existence. They were part of everything that Miguel denied; part of the old cowardly appeal to mythological deities which his intelligence rejected. Power was not kind, argued Miguel; therefore it could not be cruel. Power was not to be cajoled or commanded by human appeal; it was a wheel that went on and on; to stay its course, curses were no less futile than prayers; it was not to be drawn a fraction out of its appointed course on account of either. Whatever came to Bailarinito, good or ill, was not to be accounted for by the good or bad wishes of those who laid their thoughts upon him.

So much for the power of human intelligence. For his own benefit Juan could recapitulate almost exactly what Miguel would have said, had the matter been referred to him. Such arguments might prevail with people who were able to regulate their conduct

by the force of their own intelligence; but what of the infinitely larger number—of whom Bailarinito made one—who made as little use as possible of their brains; who accepted signs and portents because their ancestors had accepted them, and because they were easier to accept than to be dismissed by minds torpid with disuse? The involuntary, scared look on Bailarinito's face, which had at the time filled him with an ugly triumph, remained in Juan's memory now as a reproach, recalling to his mind the fact that all bull-fighters are superstitious, and that their work is liable to be coloured by their superstitions. What if he had scared Bailarinito?—had taken away some of his confidence, so that he would go weakened into the ring, where a man requires everything he has got? Would not Juan then be responsible for whatever occurred?

This was the thought which had driven Juan out of bed on the morning of the bull-fight; he had been awake from dawn, making up his mind. It was not that he forgave Pepe for his treatment of Pilár, but that he must, somehow, get rid of the load of responsibility which was weighing him down. He had gained but partial reassurance from his effort.

He had had a vile week; there seemed no one in the house who was glad to see him. His father's displeasure smouldered above his head, Bailarinito shrugged him aside when they met, which, when it happened, was none of Juan's doing. He had had one meeting only with Pilár. Perhaps it was Bailarinito's presence in the house that kept her so much to her room, where Juan was expressly forbidden by his father to go. They could not take their customary walks together, because the company of two extra people—and two such as Bailarinito and his servant were equal to half a dozen—kept Felipa so occupied she could not accompany them. The two women paid fleeting visits to the cathedral at odd moments, but it seemed they never went twice at the same time, and Juan dared not hang about to spy upon their movements. He felt rather like a homeless dog that dare settle nowhere for fear of the disturbing foot that should hurl it out of its shelter again.

The meeting with Pilár took place at dusk, on the gallery. Both spoke in whispers, for Juan's terror of being overheard by his father communicated itself to her. She stood poised for flight at any moment, her ear inclined for dangerous sounds.

'Pilár! I am frightfully unhappy!'

'Poor little Juan! I am sorry; but what can I do? The only one who can comfort when one is unhappy is God. Why don't you go to church?'

He was dumb; unable to tell her that God had become like a minute cloud, every moment nearer and nearer to vanishing-point.

'If you would tell me that one day you will marry me——' he stammered, it being not at all what he had intended to say to her. An odd look, almost of revulsion, flitted across the girl's face.

'I don't want ever to be married,' she answered, for her, almost pettishly. 'Why do you speak of it again? You know it helped to make me ill the other time.'

'Did it? Oh, Pilár!' He was abject in his repentance. 'But what is to happen to me?' he could not help adding.

'Who should know that but God Himself? I will make a novena for you, that you may be less unhappy. *Ay-de-mi!*' she sighed. 'There are days when this house seems filled with unhappiness. Why should that be, I wonder.'

A footstep flung them apart: she went running towards the stairs; he stepped quickly into his own room, but he carried with him the knowledge that Pilár would never, through him, learn the meaning of earthly love. The darkness of despair took possession of his soul. Her voice so warm, so tender, her words so cold; the loving look in her silver eyes, but so distant, so spiritual a love that he could never kindle it to passion for himself; her kindness that was like sweet poison, the prayers she offered him in lieu of love!

When he got down to the town he encountered Tomás, of whom latterly he had seen but little.

'*Olá, hombre*; I've got something to tell you: do you know Miguel's here?'

‘Who says so?’

‘One of the girls in the Calle de las Moras got it from a gipsy. He had something to do with the row at the theatre—or so they’re saying. He didn’t get caught; someone chucked him in a taxi and got him out of the way. *Hombre!* What would El Bailarín have said if Miguel had got himself pinched, with Carlos Campeche?’

‘Where is he now?’ asked Juan eagerly.

‘Ask me something else, and I may be able to tell you. I dare say that gipsy of his is hiding him up in the caves. But I don’t mind betting he’ll turn up at the bull-fight this afternoon, if he’s still in the town. Miguel’s a fine aficionado; he’d risk more than a month in gaol to see a fight. You keep your eyes open and I’ll do the same,’ promised Tomás. ‘If I see him I’ll tell you.’

Had he known where to find Miguel, he would have gone to him at once, and begged him to take him away, to shelter him beneath his red flag. There was no other shelter for one whose certainties and beliefs had all been destroyed. In the privacy of his own room he turned to the wall and, burying his face in his arms, wept bitterly.

## Twenty

**A**T HALF PAST FIVE in the afternoon the sand was a raw ochre marked out by the dried-oxblood-coloured circles that serve to define the positions of the fight. A thin, doubtful layer of shadow flickered in and out along the concrete tiers, as the sun coquetted with the clouds. The sky was a frail blue, the line of the mountains very delicate at its lower extremity. It might rain, or it might not.

There was a lot of dust about outside the Plaza de Toros; inside, the swept tiers were rapidly filling, the galleries of unreserved places were already packed; Clarissa had nothing to fear as regards getting her money back. The restlessness of the audience, a shimmering effect of pale faces that moved against a dark background, resembled the shimmering of a swarm of bees, that clung to the stands and swarmed up the gangways. The hum of conversation was broken into by the shrill cries of the itinerant vendors: the long, mournful drone of '*Agua-a-a*' broken by the rattling cry of '*Patatas! Patatas!*' '*Alme-e-e-endras!*' howled a boy with a broken nose; a little old woman, like a witch, pushed her way from stand to stand, chattering '*Pastillas, pastillas*' in a hoarse undertone; a fruit-seller bowled oranges across the heads of seated spectators to a customer in the gallery; each orange travelled with the speed of a cricket-ball, and would infallibly have exploded on the face or body of whoever got in the way; each was triumphantly fielded to a chorus of '*Olés.*' Opera-glasses were produced, focused, and compared, with animated discussion of prices, in the more expensive seats.

A group of young bloods in light suits crashed down towards the barrera; a party of English tourists came in nervously, and immediately made for the upper tendidos. 'If I can't sit somewhere where I can get out quickly I shall be sick before it begins.' 'Here, I'm making a book on Anne's being sick; who'll take five to one against?'

In the callejon, magenta fought with emerald and emerald with orange: a little patch of bright colour, varying the scene, which, but for the yellow sand, was as drably monotonous as that of an English football crowd. Here and there a girl wore a flowered or coloured frock, but, save for that and the pale garments of the tourists, the crowd held the sombreness of a nation that makes a religion of its mourning, and which, in the case of large families, lives and dies in black. But down in the callejon the percale fighting-capes flickered out like huge geraniums as the sword-handlers folded them and laid them in readiness across the barrera. These people performed their duties in a seething crowd of individuals closely and remotely connected with the bull-ring of police and Guardias Civiles. On the opposite side of the ring, at the entrance to the *patio de los caballos*, the bull-fighters themselves had appeared, and moved about with that hunchbacked, half-cringing movement which would suggest they were ashamed of being dressed up, but which vanishes as though by magic in the paseo. The three matadors stood apart from the rest; their brown faces were blank; all three were smoking cigarettes; they had apparently nothing to say to one another. Bailarinito and Moreno stood side by side, their eyes fixed upon space, their faces immovable; Ramonito, who was always scared stiff before a fight, but whose courage in facing the bull equalled his timidity before it appeared, vanished abruptly; neither of the others appeared to notice his absence.

The band played, with no marked unanimity of key, a theme-song from Hollywood; three men marched across the ring, keeping ironic time with the music, and unfurled an advertisement banner for somebody's petrol—which they solemnly proceeded to turn north, south, east, and west.



Opposite the patio the picadores were already hoisted into their saddles, looking more like robot figures than human beings in their tin helmets, with their grotesquely armoured legs; the alguaciles rode their horses casually between the barrera fences, chatting with their acquaintances of the first tiers. It was all very tame, very quiet, very devoid of emotion. The absence of sun afflicted all, as the absence of the principal actor in a drama might afflict its participators. A few fans fluttered; someone put up the opera-glasses to observe a mantilla, and lowered them with a ludicrous expression of disappointment.

Bailarinito's belongings were scattered. Don José, as usual, had gone down to the barrera with Don Alonso and several other of his friends. He was chatting with the personnel of the ring, shaking hands with acquaintances, accepting introductions to strangers—behaving precisely as he behaved at any other bull-fight, in which he had no personal interest. He had taken off his hat and bowed gravely to the gentlemen of the Press as he came down to his seat; they had returned the compliment with an equal gravity, and with respect for one who had survived both their malice and their lucubrations. One youngster nudged his neighbour and muttered an enquiry. '*Anda véte!*' retorted the other scornfully. 'You call yourself a bull-fight critic and don't know El Bailarín?'

Juan, Pilár, and Felipa were seated in the *delanteros de grada*, because Don José thought it was better. Pilár should not see her first fight from too close a viewpoint; characteristically, his egotism had never admitted the suggestion she might not care to go at all. He had simply taken it for granted that, with the rest of the household, she would be interested to see Pepe fight, and with her usual meekness she had accepted the position. She sat between Juan and Felipa, wearing a black mantilla instead of a white one, over a small and old-fashioned but beautiful comb. She knew nothing of the etiquette of the bull-fight, and thought only of preserving her mourning for her grandmother. Her face was as calm as a lake; she had not the least idea of what to expect, although Felipa had told her the horse part was fearful and had

warned her to close her eyes. She was only a little dizzy, from being perched at a height and from watching the crowds.

On Pilár's right sat Felipa, bare-headed, and on her left Juan. His father had told him coldly that it was his duty to look after the two women. The satisfaction he might have reaped from knowing himself immune from the dreaded visit to the back of the ring was swamped in his heaviness of body and mind. He had begun to feel really ill with all the demands which recent events had made upon his emotional system, and his unhappy encounter with Balarinito during the morning had contributed the final straw to his misery. Pilár, turning an angelic face of solicitude towards him, enquired in an undertone if he was sick. He answered, 'Yes: for you.' But her blank look of lack of understanding drove the knife deeper into his heart, and he lapsed into silence. It was not worth while saying ordinary things to Pilár, and it would certainly be imprudent to risk Felipa's overhearing if he attempted to make verbal love to her. And he was deeply worried by Pilár's probable reaction to the bull-fight, and thought that his father had done very wrong in obliging her to come.

Clarissa, by virtue of her financial interest in the fight, had been invited to occupy a seat in the President's box; but she had refused, because it was too far from the ring to suit her tastes. She wanted to be near enough to see and hear and smell everything: so that not a solitary sensation escaped her. So she sat in the second row of the barrera seats, wearing a white lace mantilla; her maid, who was a Frenchwoman, had learned how to put it on, and Clarissa looked very handsome, with a day-light make-up *à la Españole*, carefully adjusted to her auburn hair.

She sat waiting, a little heavy from her late lunch, thinking of the first corrida she had seen, in Madrid. It had conveyed nothing to her, but she had paid thirty-five pesetas for her seat, and might as well see her money's worth. Horses, bulls, and men were of as little interest to her as circus performers until directly in front of her seat a man got the cornada—*boum!*—clean in the abdomen.

It was then she bought the white mantilla. From Valladolid to Barcelona, from Sevilla to Madrid, from San Sebastian to Malaga she chased, in the wake of the 'great' matadors. Not that it made any difference to her if they were great or not. If she had thought it out, she might have realized that the finer the matador the less were her chances of seeing the thing she had first seen in Madrid. Everything else had gone stale on her, but this one thing went down into her like a dart, galvanizing the effete sensations of her body.

At the end of a hundred corridas she knew nothing of the art or technique of the bull-fight; the only thing that excited her was the juxtaposition of the bull to the man: the likelihood or unlikelihood of contact. Balarinito, with his insane chances, his occasional buffooneries which he indulged in to please the ignorant foreigner, fulfilled her ideal of the matador, which was simply the man who took the greatest risks, regardless of reason or intelligence. From the first moment of seeing him he had obsessed her; contact with his brave, foolish body seemed to promise a new era of sensation that should revive all that her life of sensual excess had atrophied.

Her instinct was to become his mistress: but, crazy as she was, she knew that to do so was too risky. In a month or two she would lose him—perhaps a year: for she had her wealth to act as an attraction, if her own failed. Then he'd tire, or find a richer woman. . . . For many years she had harboured a bitter grudge against her husband's relations, who had persecuted her with their cold scorn from the day he married her. Through Balarinito she now saw a wonderful way of flouting them.

She sat tightly, breathing a little heavily, languidly moving her unnecessary fan: waiting for the sensation Balarinito should provide for her this afternoon.

At the very top of the gradas, in the cheapest seats on the shadowed tide, sat Miguel. He could have had a seat for three pesetas fifty in the sun, but his eyes were bad; they were so bad he would have to see an oculist as soon as he could afford it. All the time there was a prickling behind them, and often they

streamed with water, so that for some minutes he could do nothing but mop it away. His crooked body quivered with eagerness, so that his knee, which was pressed into the back of the man in front of him, communicated the vibration, and its recipient turned round to protest.

'*Hombre*, what's wrong with you? Have you got the jitters?'

He muttered an apology and twisted sideways, for he could not control his leg. The President entered his box: a burst of applause rattled like muffled musketry round the ring.

Prologue came on the scene, in the character of the alguaciles who rode their dark chestnut horses slowly across the sand; their black velvet fifteenth-century costumes took on a flat fullness as of charcoal in the indifferent light.

A moment later the paseo came out, three abreast, keeping in precise step with the band, which was now playing the 'Toreador' music from *Carmen*. The lack of sun robbed the costumes of their glitter, projecting the small moving figures upon their yellow background with an effect of cinematography. When the applause died down, the only sound was that of the band and the jingle of the mule-teams, with their scarlet plumage and belled caparison. The picadores, with their slanted lances, looked like grotesque dolls borne in the rear of the lines.

Bailarinito was outside, on the right; in the middle was the small light figure of Moreno; on the left, Ramonito, stalking like a scarecrow, something of indifference, of predestination, on his yellow face. He was only twenty-three, but looked much older; and he was a sick man. He knew himself to be a sick man, and death was unimportant to him: he only hoped that, if he should be marked to die this afternoon, it would happen quickly, with the minimum of fear and pain. His former timidity was gone; he did not fear anything.

Of the three matadors, Bailarinito presented the best appearance; he overshadowed the small, light Moreno with his height and spread of shoulder. He was wearing a new suit; the trousers looked as if he had been sewn into them. If the sun had not gone

in, they would have shone like a sheet of silver; they moulded his body in a pale, cold colour, as of water. His sash was black, his stockings salmon. He wore the conventional scarlet tie. An unoriginal *ensemble*, but it would not have been lacking in its effect if the sun had been shining: as it was, he wished he had worn the blue. His dress cape, tightly furled round his left arm, was of golden brocade, lavishly encrusted with galon and lined with a pale crocus yellow. Those with opera-glasses could see his handsome, dissolute face, with its hard-boiled bull-fighter's expression lying like a glaze over whatever he was feeling or thinking. He alone gave the public value for their money in his appearance. The small Moreno had a frightened look, which did not mean that he was frightened—it was something to do with his thin, delicate features and the largeness of his dark eyes. His bearing was too modest to be effective in the paseo.

After the salute the mule-teams swung out, and the picadores, breaking away from their ranks, wheeled their unsteady and blind-folded mounts to the sides of the ring, facing towards the toril. A couple of attendants, in Basque berets and coloured shirts, stood at each horse's head—in case the victim should assert its right to live, and, in spite of the eye-bandage, break away and make for safety.

A kind of lull lay on the scene; the cloudiness of the sky had its insensible effect upon the temperaments of performers and audience alike; most of the bull-fighters were jumpy, for it is unpleasant to fight under a dull sky, and the necessity of appearing calm slowed their tempo a little. Clarissa leaned forward eagerly as Bailarinito stepped into the callejon; he did not even glance at her as he handed his dress cape to the sword-handler, who brought it up to Clarissa. The expression on Bailarinito's face was cold and detached; once his eyes met those of his father; the two pairs of eyes were like dull glass.

Bailarinito's sword-handler said something to him, holding out the water-jug; Bailarinito shook his head: he had evidently decided to work with a dry cape. He hung his fighting cape negligently upon his arm and leaned on the barrera; Moreno, as

his senior, had the priority to him. Behind him, Don José chose a cigar and lit it. He was not to be outdone in nonchalance.

Moreno passed round the callejon to his wooden shelter; those whom he passed saw that his face was quite calm, like smooth amber-coloured wax; he moved with a light, easy swing, unhurriedly. His two banderilleros were already posted against the fence, and the servants who had been smoothing the sand went running out of the ring.

There was the usual anticipatory hush, broken by a unanimous 'Ah!' as the sun suddenly detached itself from a cloudbank and filled the great cup of the Plaza with a cool golden light. Even the bull-fighters themselves permitted a gleam of gratification to lighten their expressions. The shadows of the picadores and their horses shot suddenly before them on the sand, like living replicas of themselves. The handkerchief fell; the trumpet sang.

In a dead silence a dark, medium-sized bull trotted into the ring with an air of surprise. A figure detached itself from the fence and tore across the ring, trailing the folds of a pink cape. The bull stared for a moment; galloped a little; stood still, looking shocked, and finally turned its back. The sun hid his face.

#### IN THEIR HEARTS :

*Bailarinito:* I'll fight well to-day. I can feel it in my bones. I'm going to fight well and make them mad over me. The sun will come out soon. I'm taking the white bull first, because it will easily be the worst. Most showy. But most difficult. The horns are bigger than they told me. . . . I'll take that one first. The horns are very big. They would go right through. . . . That's the one I'm taking first.

I feel grand. I've never felt so grand for weeks. I'll be able to do things slowly to-day; I can feel that. Very slow veronicas. All the tricks—except the kneeling down one, and biting the bull's horn. Not with El Bailarín here. He doesn't understand one must do that sort of thing for foreigners. I'll bet he never did as much to make the bull-fight popular with foreigners as I've done.

That bull's a *bicho* Moreno's got; they'll give him the *bronca* in a minute, if he doesn't look out. He hasn't got the *cartel* I've got at Malaga. I'll have to think of something else to do, to give Clarissa her kick. Perhaps I'll let the bull bump me. Not the white one; the second. The white one's too heavy. This is a good suit. If the sun comes out it will be better. Ten thousand pesetas. It would be a pity if it got spoiled. If the white bull spoiled it. Hell, how should it spoil it?

Have I got that medal?—One, two, three, five, seven, eight—there ought to be nine. Why the hell aren't there nine? Which one's missing? Is it the San Jorge or Nuestra Señora? Who was it gave me the San Jorge?—That Englishwoman at San Sebastian.—It's all right; here it is. Nine. All there. What the devil came over the *niño*?

It's a grand day. I feel grand. Here's the sun again. I'll be grand. I'll show them something they don't know about in Granada. Granada! A fine dust-heap. How many times will Vilchez book me Madrid next season? Br-r-r! That was a close one for Moreno.

Did I tell Luis about bending down and touching my shoelace? The others know, but it's the first time he has worked with me. Ignacio will tell him; he'll tell him the code of signals. It's all right. Luis will have got that.

I'll have to go in in a minute. That's a nasty bull. Why didn't he take the big one first? I fight better than Moreno. I fight better than Ramonito. Vilchez says I fight better than Ramonito. Perhaps he says that because Ramonito will be dead soon, and it's no good praising a horse that's going to fall down before it gets to the stable. They'll find Ramonito slow after me. I dare say a lot of them will go out after my second bull. I feel fine. I'll fight in closer than I've ever done before. Moreno's getting to the end of his stuff; they're turning the second horse round. I'd better be going in.

Shall I let Luis plant two pairs and do one myself? Or shall I let them take the three pairs between them? I did badly at Badajos. Hell, that was just nerves! Blessed Virgin, send me a

bull that runs straight. I'll be fine with a bull that runs straight. The wind's keeping down.

I'm glad I didn't let them wet my cape. It's difficult to do much with a cape that's heavy with water. That was just a bit of the *niño's* temper. I'll give him a hell of a hiding. It didn't mean anything, though. I can feel Clarissa looking at me. Perhaps after to-day she'll let me. . . . This bull's a *bicho*. Why doesn't Ramonito get out farther to the left?

What Juan wants is a hell of a good hiding. Br-r-r! Ugly face! Go and do your duty on the horse first.

Moreno's got a hell of a cuadrilla. He's got a hell of a cuadrilla. Hup! That's got it. He'll come off. No, he won't. I suppose Luis knows about the shoelace. A good hiding. Now it's me—now——

*Clarissa:* I feel crazy; in just another minute or two I'll go right crazy.

This man's no good; why don't they give him the *bronca*, or whatever it's called? What a language; you need tonsils to cope with it; pity I had mine out. There's no excitement in him. He's a bit of a coward, I believe. There . . . no. This bull's as slow on its feet as an old pony. All that cape flapping gets dull after a while. It gets on my nerves. Who'd have nerves? I'd give a million dollars to see their faces in Boston when they read I've married Bailarinito. I'll have to get him to come to Boston and we'll throw some parties. That'll go well in Boston. I'll ask Lydia van Dongen.

Bailarinito looks marvellous. I'll bet I'm not the only woman who thinks he looks marvellous. I wonder where that girl he used to be engaged to is sitting? I'd like to have a look at her. I suppose those are tarts over there. The tarts would come down to see Bailarinito fight. He's saving himself for his own bulls, I suppose. He would. Why the hell doesn't he fight? I want to see him do that thing again—the thing with the bull's horn. When he does that thing my stomach just rises up and hits my front teeth.



I wonder if anyone will get gored this afternoon. Madrid—that man running—and turning round just as he reached the fence. What did he do that for? You could hear the bang, when the horn went through him and hit the fence, all round the ring.

How long, O Lord, how long? This is as dull as a church meeting. What are they cheering for? I don't see anything to cheer for. He's just fiddling about with the red flannel and the sword. What a fool the bull is not to take its chances. Bulls have no sense. This is the last part; it can't go on much longer. That was funny when the bull went for the dead horse. Waste of energy. Bulls are—what's it?—*loco*; that's the word.

I'll make Bailarinito drive back with me when it's over.

God, this is just too tedious.

I must see a doctor about my nerves. They say there aren't any good ones in this country unless you go to Madrid. I'll make him come to Madrid with me. We'd better be married in Madrid. I dare say it's quite a good place to start a honeymoon. On to San Sebastian afterwards. If we get tired of that, there's Biarritz. I want some more clothes—that's Paris. I wish I could go to sleep. You could hear the bang, when the horn went through him and hit the fence, all round the ring.

I'll be the Señora Doña Clarissa Díaz Marquez. Some of the folks at home are so ignorant they'll take it for a title. They won't know what to do about me at dinner-parties! That will be a joke! I wonder what they'd say if I showed them my father-in-law? He'd be taken for a grandee, at the very least.

You never know with these dam' Spaniards. The way he looked. They either expect you to sleep with them at sight, or they look at you as if you were dirt for wanting it. What would El Bailarín have done if I'd——? He's *enigmatical*. Maybe Bailarinito's too young to be enigmatical. A man can't have everything. Bailarinito's about as clear as muddy water. I'm crazy to love him. I'd like to be sitting with his father. You could hear the noise when the horn . . .

*An English tourist:* Ugh! That's pretty horrible. I suppose these

Spaniards are enjoying it. Pretty barbaric if they are. They say the horses are doped. Hope so—poor brutes! I could do with a drink after that last one.

But it's pretty exciting—all that cape stuff is exciting—if one only understood it all. Tantalizing, in a way. Your eye needs training to it. No chance of taking it in the first time. Why does a dead horse covered with canvas look worse than a dead horse not covered at all?

By George, it must take some pluck to do that. I wonder what it feels like to be down there? Jolly glad I'm not. These chaps must be in marvellous training; they probably go into training like footballers—or boxers. H'm! That doesn't seem to fit in with what you hear about matadors. Rum chaps. Awfully conceited. Well, if I could do that stuff I'd think I'd got something to be conceited about. A bit stiff on the bull, making a pincushion of him. How fast can a bull run?

It's quite horrible. But I'm liking it. I can't understand myself in the least. If somebody started that in England, I suppose I'd join all sorts of societies for putting it down. But I'm liking it. I wonder if the atmosphere has something to do with it? These mountains are pretty savage. Perhaps they do something to you. That's a potty kind of notion. A man doesn't know himself until he gets into a foreign country.

How many more bulls are there?—Five? That's good. I never felt so excited in my life. God, that was a near squeak. I thought he was done for that time. This next chap—Bailarinito or whatever they call it—comes of a bull-fighting family. It must make a difference.

It sickens and hypnotizes you. That's what it does: sickens and hypnotizes . . .

I reckon it would take eight or ten fights to get one's eye in on that cape-work. Poor old bull, that's done you. No—this is beastly; I hate this. Why does the beast go down on its knees like that—as if it's asking them to let it off? That's beastly! That's foul. I hate that—and the horses.

Phew! So that's the first. Where am I going next? Ronda,

is it?—or Cordoba? I wonder if they've got a bull-fight next Sunday at Cordoba? It will take a bit of time to get one's eye in on that cape-work.

*Felipa:* Oh, the poor horses. Mary, Mother of Grace, pity the poor horses. O God, You made horses just as You made human beings; You gave them beautiful thin legs like the stalks of flowers, and shining coats and delicate soft noses. You put gentle and loving hearts into them. O God, the poor horses.

You brought the little foals into the world. The little foals that stand in their mother's shadow and are as shy as mice.

I must shut my eyes. What is the use of shutting my eyes? I can see just the same. I can see the bull's head bumping and boring as though at a truss of straw: and I can see the horse rising in the air with his legs dangling over the bull's body, and I can see those same poor legs bending and breaking with the weight of his torn belly. . . . God, You never meant this to happen to horses. O God, the bull-fight is a great sin, but why should the horses pay the price of it? Oh—oh—the men are seizing its mouth, dragging upon it—to make it turn its side—its poor side—its belly—*O God*. The poor horses! The poor horses!

*Pilár:* I know something terrible is happening when Juan puts his hand over my eyes. I do not understand. Why do people pay to see something terrible? Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. I can feel the heart of Juan beating hard against my arm. It is because he is seeing something terrible. When can we go home?

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. . . . Hail, Mary, full of grace . . . Juan's hand is across my eyes. Hail, Mary. . . . His hand is trembling.

*Juan:* The tragedy is not in the horse's pain, or in the bull's pain, or in the man's pain; the tragedy is that human beings

should enjoy watching pain. All that the horse does and all the man and the bull do are fine and noble, but the people who are looking on are the ones that make it vile.

The eyelids of Pilár are as soft as silk, and they quiver like the wings of little birds under my fingers.

Perez da Vaiga was drunk. He is always drinking. Those things that he said are the things a man thinks when he is drunk in a certain way: so that all appears lovely and there is a mystical meaning in the falling of a leaf. The valour of Spain does not rest upon the bull-fight. It is because of the bull-fight that we have lost our world-power. Because we watch the bull-fight and let all our strength drain away in a filthy sensationalism. The only people who profit by the bull-fight are the matadors themselves, who exist upon their braveness and nobility. And there are only about fifty matadors in all Spain!

Felipa is crying; she feels for the horses; she doesn't understand what a little part of the whole thing they are. But she is kind, so she cries for the horses.

How beautifully Paco placed that pair of banderillas! How lovely the movements are in themselves. It is much better up here than down on the barrera; one can see the whole thing as a picture. But one is more conscious of the people. Blessed Lady, thank you for making it not necessary for me to go behind the ring this afternoon.

I didn't mean it, Balarinito; you know I didn't mean it.

Pilár's eyelids are like the petals of flowers, and I can feel her dear little eyelashes tickling the tips of my fingers. Nothing is happening now, but I must pretend for a little longer, so I can keep my fingers over her eyes. If I could close them with my lips——! Why cannot Pilár love me as I love her? I wonder if her heart is beating like mine? What will she do when the bull dies?

Moreno is a prince. Everything that he does is beautiful, and nearly everything is brave. They are hoping to see him killed. They want to taste death, to smack their lips over it. They are defiling all his nobility with their filthy sensations. They don't

think of valour or anything else. They just come to see someone do something they haven't got the courage to do themselves. They want to see something that is beautiful broken and made useless. The Greeks who watched the tragedies of Sophocles weren't like that. Perez was drunk—and he wanted to pay a compliment to El Bailarín. So he made a beautiful sentence which meant nothing—just as I have done myself before now. It is a great temptation, when one is a poet, to string words together that sound well, without caring if they are true or not. Truth is important: like courage. Truth and courage are the same thing. They are the inner core of the nobility of mankind. Courage is being true to oneself, and truth is the courage to face reality.

I wonder if Bailarinito is still thinking I meant it?

Up to now no one has been hurt except the horses. It will be quite clean behind the ring.

If everyone could go behind, wouldn't they understand what a horrible thing it is? They would see all the things their excitement won't allow them to think about while they are watching the fight, feeling their abominable sensations.

Where is courage to be found? Not in watching the bull-fight.

*There is no God.* How many of these people think there is?

Where is Tomás? Has he seen Miguel? How could one hope to find anybody in a crowd like this, unless one knew whereabouts they were sitting? Suppose Miguel were in trouble over the Communist rioting? Suppose they arrested him here in the bull-ring? Whatever happens to him, Miguel is all right, because he has—what did he call it?—he has adjusted himself to Power. How weak I am! How weak and mean! If I were like Miguel, and felt the way I do about all this, I should leap up and denounce the whole thing. I should write in the papers about it, and find a patron who would help me to get my things into print. But I am weak. I do not care enough about them. I would rather not quarrel with people I love. I pretend to believe in things I don't believe in, and I allow myself to be coerced into doing things I do not like. And I did not mean it when I cursed Bailarinito. He is my brother.

Now Moreno is profiling towards the bull; I had better close Pilár's eyes for her again.

*Miguel:* There's a whole morality in this, if only the people could be educated to see it. There's Christianity destroying its victims—just as it has done ever since it began—and being destroyed itself in the end, because it's just an unregulated, romantical force which must give way to scientific intellectual advance. . . . The horse is sacrificed because it's a fool and is useless, and all fools and all useless creatures must in the end be sacrificed to the good of the majority. And the bull is sacrificed because it stands for courage without sense. Perez da Vaiga was right; if Jesus of Nazareth had known what He was doing He would never have suffered the crucifixion. Courage and ignorance led Him to the cross; folly and ignorance have sacrificed His followers ever since. Men have given their lives to the vindication of their spiritual independence, and they triumph in the end. That's what Perez meant. . . .

Moreno is full of honour and valour, and it is a privilege to see him when he is fighting as he is this afternoon. He cannot kill as well as he fights, but that is because he is so small. How little he looks—hardly any bigger than I. But he has straight shoulders and powerful loins. If my back had been straight and I'd had two sound legs I might have been down there now—the cape would tug in my hands as it spread out and the wind of the bull's rush would catch me, as it's catching Moreno.

I'd have made a good matador. A better matador than Bailarinito, for I'd have scorned to use his tricks. It is a pity.

All Moreno does is simple and clear and candid. It is not great bull-fighting, and it is old-fashioned in comparison with what Ortega does, and Villalta, and sometimes Lalanda. But it makes one feel something. It has its own nobility. Nothing is worth doing by trickery. I'd like to know how that strikes those damned priests sitting down below there! All one's courage in one's two hands, up to the enemy. Honourable. What is a man without honour?

If Bailarinito makes as good a show he will be all right. But will he? I hope he will be good, for the sake of El Bailarín. I mean I hope the people will think he is good; for there is nothing really good in anything he does. It won't be pleasant for El Bailarín to watch him cheating his way through the faena! To have one son a revolutionary and other an incompetent is too much of a load for any ass to carry! Bailarinito must subdue himself—he must leave out all that vulgar nonsense he makes play with in Malaga. I will try to think the thought into his block head.

Bailarinito, try to fight honourably; try really to do things instead of looking as though you were doing them. Don't make yourself ridiculous by attempting things no one but a maniac would undertake. Get rid of all this latter-day rubbish and fight as you used to do in the beginning, when all your work was pure and you had not begun to allow your audiences to influence you. Fundamentally, Bailarinito, you're a good bull-fighter; but you aren't a Joselito, and all this finery isn't going to cheat us into thinking you are.

What's the use of trying to think things into Bailarinito? He only has this idea of showing off in front of his women. In front of this American of his.—That's good, Moreno, that's good.

Bailarinito is getting ready to cut his own throat; why does not El Bailarín interfere? He must have some good reason of his own for doing nothing, for he's as wily as an old snake, and if he chose he could cut out this marriage nonsense with a flick of his wrist. He's got a reason for it. He could so easily do something. But he won't. He's just going to let Bailarinito cut his own throat; and afterwards he will suffer more than Bailarinito will suffer, because he will remember he could have stopped it, and that he sacrificed Bailarinito to some secret thing of his own.

That's it. That's the way to do it—very gently—just tilting the bull up on end, as it were. That's the way, Moreno. He's wearing down on the right; a good pair of darts will finish it. He should have Luis to banderillear for him; he's wasted on Bailarinito. I believe El Bailarín knows about Bailarinito. That's why he's letting him cut his throat.

There's enough valour down there to set Spain alight and save her from her ignominy. Watching one man doing a difficult thing bravely makes one feel one must go and do one's own thing bravely, whatever that may be.

*Don José (smoking his cigar):* My God, I grant You I have not paid as much attention to You in the past as I have been told it was my duty to do. But in the future things will be very different. I am getting ready to lead a virtuous and noble life, and with the help of the angel you have sent to be my guide I will perform all the duties which, in the past, as You know, I have neglected. Do not let my past neglect of You stand against me now, when I supplicate You for my son Pepe, who is just going out to kill his bull in front of all these people.

Do not allow any harm to come to him, nor to me through him: for what shames him is my shame, and although I can bear all sorts of physical pain, as You know, with all the times the bull has hit me and all the scars his horns have left on my body, I cannot bear the pain of shame.

(Not that Pepe will give me anything to be ashamed about; he is my son and the inheritor of my genius, and it is not for a minute to be doubted that he will bear himself nobly, and honour his parentage and the experience he has gained during his career. *Madre de Dios*, if Madrid has accepted him, what can Granada find to say? And now that he has nothing on his mind . . .)

My God, I have been, I grant You, very bad in the past; but those years are at an end, and for the most part I have lived a good life latterly; I have not had much to do with women, and I have not deceived anyone in business or betrayed any of my friends: save in self-defence, when, as You know, all things are permissible. In consideration of these things I ask You to overlook my negligence of You, which I shall repent and repair. I only ask You to take charge of the life and the honour of my son this afternoon. Without his honour his life would be valueless to us both, and without his life mine will be at an end. Show



me to-day in my son the fulfilment of myself: the completion of my work; the satisfaction of my pride. And then I shall be content to resign myself into Your hands and to take no further thought for my own aggrandizement. Send him a good bull, and let his patron saint stand between him and danger. Virgin Mother of Jesus, look after my boy: Blessed Lady of sorrows, take charge of us both and hold us in the bosom of thy motherhood.

Hail, Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee .

## Twenty-One

**B**AILARINITO drew the bull out very delicately while Garra, the picador, was still on the ground, with the horse partly on top of him; the bull's interest flickered between the prostrate couple and the fan of pink percale which opened to his right. A crimson streak flickered down his shoulder; he stood for a moment perfectly still, apparently choosing between the quick and the dead. One of the horse's legs stood up at a ridiculous angle; Garra was biting sand with his mouth, so as not to groan with the horse's weight on his lower ribs. The rest of the cuadrilla was spread out, motionless, waiting the moment to go in and help Garra, but dependent on Bailarinito's movements. He went in ridiculously close, drawing away smoothly and swiftly as the ears of the bull started to twitch.

The bull followed a few steps; stood still again. The crowd booed—not at Bailarinito, but at the bull. It was the white one, with some inclination to roan on its hindquarters and on one side of the shoulder; broader and longer in the horn than a bull-fighter cares for, although not unduly massive in the rest of its proportions. It did not, for example, equal the bull, 'as big as a post-office', which Ramonito had drawn. Ramonito watched it with a melancholy indifference; he would rather have had it than his own.

From its entrance the white bull had shown an abominable disposition to evade the legitimate order of the fight by refusing to oppose the normal reactions to the efforts of the bull-fighters. Yet it was not cowardly; it had come up to take its punishment

the second time with the vara with the force and speed of an express train, and all felt that its present stillness was no indication of its mental or physical condition. It was rather as if a brain of infinite resource in malice throbbed like an engine behind the spreading frontal. With such a bull, it is impossible for any matador to give an impressive display; his activities are apt to be defensive rather than aggressive, for he is unable to rely upon the bull's reacting in any stereotyped fashion to the stimulus of cape or muleta.

It was, therefore, generally acknowledged that Balarinito had got a nasty bull, and that if he got through with a moderate decency, and achieved a fair kill, it was all that could be expected. No one would look for fancy-work on a bull which had already shown itself capable of switching its apparently fixed attention from the cape to the man at a second's notice, or of mulish refusal to take the least notice of either.

Balarinito's mind, working quickly, had prepared his *quite*: he had to turn the bull towards the next horse, and he wanted to do it, if possible, with a cambio that would shift the bull from his left to his right, and taking advantage of its moment of confusion, lead it into a series of veronicas, as spectacular as possible but not unduly prolonged. In this project, he did not, for once, under-estimate his difficulty: the bull had shown itself so unreliable that even Balarinito's self-confidence was a little reduced, at least to the point of being completely serious. To take this bull's charge into his cape, to change its direction, and to make it circle round his ribs were not going to be child's play, as it might have been with an honest animal, still suffering from the shock of its pic. This bull appeared hardly to have felt its two stabs; at any rate, they had made no moral difference to it. Unless something happened with the next ones, it would enter upon the next suerte in much the same condition in which it came into the ring, and would play hell with the banderilleros.

Balarinito began to swear, quietly and filthily, under his breath. He gave the cape a tiny shake, keeping his eye on the bull's, which stared sullenly at the pink stuff.

The sunlight was now steady, the sun itself well over to the westward, and the silver of Bailarinito's suit picked up the orange of the sand so that in Juan's eyes his body resembled a beautiful golden fish that balanced against invisible water.

The charge of the bull came so suddenly, with such an unregulated and barbarous speed, that Bailarinito knew in a flash his cambio was out of the question. Keeping his feet well together, he clutched the cape close to his left hip with his right hand, and with the left made the folds belly out in the line of the charge, prepared, if necessary, to fake the veronica by a sidestep right, if the bull showed a disposition to hook. But a disconcerting incident turned the whole manœuvre to ridicule. The wind, which had completely fallen since the beginning of the fight, suddenly freshened, lifted the cape: and the bull, carried by its own weight and speed, and unchecked by the cape, crashed past, ending with a slithering descent on its knees. The crowd laughed and its laughter was gall to Bailarinito. He knew he should not have trusted to the wind—should have been working with a wet cape—and his vanity was stung by his own mistake. Thanks to his own improvidence, he had lost geographical control of the bull, which was in entirely the wrong place in the ring, and would have to be brought back for its second charge at the horse.

He gave a furious sign, saw his banderilleros running out with the capes, and took the wet one that his sword-handler, running, brought to him. When the bull came round, he was ready; but the look on his face was poisonous. Those near enough could see it. One or two of the spectators nudged one another; Bailarinito got that look on his face when he was going to do something so stupid, so out-facing all common sense that a child would blush for him.

The bull came at him nearly as hard as the first time; but on this occasion the cape did its duty. An electric current of satisfaction ran through Bailarinito as the bull's head went down into the hem of the material, following and missing always as the slow swing of Bailarinito's arms carried it on. The balls of his feet, in light pumps, made a circle in the sand; having accomplished

the thing once, he would do it again—half a dozen times. The bull took the second citation readily enough, its body and the cape and Bailarinito were one as he pivoted for the second time, and Bailarinito's lips were stretched in the soulless grin of the victor as he prepared his third veronica. Crazy with satisfaction at having dominated this animal, he decided, the third time, to bring it right in, so that its shoulder nearly touched him—a trick only to be attempted with the most reliable and honest of bulls. He had the insane desire to advertise his bravery, to slap it in people's faces, and to silence for ever the enemies who had believed the malicious reports in the papers. And, naturally, the inevitable happened.

Irritated by its senseless chase after an ever-elusive object, and wise enough to realize that the thing that moved was controlled by the thing that stood still, the bull, while continuing to follow, yiked sideways and upwards, catching Bailarinito under the armpit, where the jacket hung a little away from the body—a fact which saved him from the cornada—splitting the material, and swinging Bailarinito right into the folds of his own cape, which, smothering round him, held him momentarily prisoner for what might have been a fatal moment had not Ramonito instantly closed in with a swipe of his own cape across the bull's face, which baffled it in its immediate object and gave Bailarinito time to recover from his ignominious position.

He was raving with anger when he went towards the barrera for the water his sword-handler handed to him: too furious to see that he had brought the incident upon himself by his own stupidity, or to appreciate the fact that Ramonito's intervention was inevitable. Ramonito had stolen his bull from him before he had finished his *quite*! He would not forget that. Ramonito had made a public fool of him: spoiling his performance before a crowd—which, had he but known it, asked nothing more from him than the prudent disposal of a bull which would not in any circumstances provide a brilliant spectacle, and which rather despised him than otherwise for attempting stuff which could only end in his own defeat.

Ramonito, in his melancholy, half-hearted fashion was coaxing the bull up towards the second horse. Bailarinito scowled and turned his back; he had nothing further to do for the present; he could stand by the barrera, nursing his grudge and planning how to achieve the *exito* on which he had set his heart.

. . . *Dios mio!* They were cheering Ramonito. He had done something that tickled their stupid taste. Bailarinito turned round slowly, with a sour smile on his face. Ramonito had the style of a grave digger. He swung the cloak as a man might swing a spadeful of earth—heavily, rhythmically, without emotion. Yet there was something sinister about his stuff that got at these impassive Granadinos. They liked Ramonito better than they liked him. Wait. They would see.

In the second *suerte*, Bailarinito planted an impeccable pair of darts. He had never planted so good a pair in his life. Delicately close together, well back, with a powerful left-right swing of the body that sent the bull charging in the wrong direction, prancing and tossing round the ring with the shafts clacking behind his head, while the crowd burst into the longest chorus of applause they had so far given to any act that took place in the ring. The blood boiled in Bailarinito's veins; he had reinstated himself. He stood, a half smile on his lips, watching Luis, a brilliant *banderillero*, miss with one of his darts. That was fine! That might have been planned by heaven, to set off his own performance. He knew he had not a reputation for good work with the darts; it was a business that did not appeal to him, and which he, therefore, took little pains with as a rule: usually accepting the third pair, and planting them from the side. His anger and resentment at Ramonito's success with the crowd had driven him into a performance which he was unlikely to equal for a good many seasons.

The bull now was somewhat reduced. Still capable of an infinite malice, its rushes were slower, more destructive, and it had only one object, which was murder. It had proved itself practically immune to cape-work, dealing with it or not, just as it chose, with a lively power of individualization between the

man and the cloth; but the banderillas, one of which had penetrated deep into his shoulder, had destroyed its self-confidence. A kind of tragic grandeur had gathered about it, as of an old trickster who, knowing all the moves that might confound his opponent, has lost the power to put them into practice, yet despises the enemy whose knowledge is inferior to his own.

On Don José's face was fixed a really ghastly smile. It was such a smile as one may see upon the faces of the dead, a rictus of the facial muscles which exposes the teeth of upper and lower jaw. His eyes were blank, and his face the colour of lead. He sat in what he supposed was an easy position, but his limbs were stone: every muscle was called upon to do its work in the abnormal and ugly stiffening of his body.

He had seen—none more clearly—the looseness and weakness of Pepe's performance, and the stupidity of his line of attack. He could have borne it better if Pepe had not made such a swagger over it, had not striven to cover his failings with a false æstheticism that was as offensive to the eye as gilt decoration on common deal. In such circumstances his courage was an insult to his audience—an audience which was restive enough after his preposterous trick with the cape, and which was only partly placated by the banderillas.

That had been good! Don José's tormented mind clung like a drowning thing to the placing of the banderillas. The bull was a bad one; there was no one to deny that. And the boy had been over-anxious to make his impression upon his fellow townsmen. These things were in themselves enough to condone in part his errors of judgment. In part. Not to condone the cheapness and flashiness of his work with the cape; not to condone his criminal carelessness in working with a dry cape on such a day as this.

Don José never knew that he groaned aloud as Bailarinito came out with the sword and muleta; never realized that he muttered under his breath—'Whatever may come of this, you are my boy, and I love you as I love my own body; only save yourself, only save yourself——' He never knew that he spoke these

words, and Don Alonso Quintero, sitting upon his right, was very tactful.

Bailarinito walked out towards the bull, with the muleta concealing the sword, held in both hands. It was the classic opening, and he was resolved, now that the time had come, to work out his conclusion in the most serious style of which he was capable. And of which the bull would permit. The bull was still doing too much 'permitting' for Bailarinito's taste. By this time, had the sequence of events gone properly, the control should have been in the hands of the matador.

The bull had developed its querencia, the place where it liked to be, and was comfortable and confident, in a common enough situation—close to the barrera; and when Bailarinito went in, the cuadrilla had drawn it nicely away from it, towards the middle of the ring. It was, however, turned facing towards the barrera, the right position for the faena Bailarinito proposed to execute. The faena was a great success: the bull charged directly, and, just as its hot and reeking body drew level with him, Bailarinito raised his hands, tilting the bull on end—as Moreno had done with his bull—and remained like a statue while it rushed on to its querencia. All the more unsophisticated members of the audience—and, to judge by the volume of sound, these must have been in the majority—applauded violently as Bailarinito achieved this impressive-looking trick, which in itself is simple enough for anyone with courage to attempt.

The bull was difficult and ugly about leaving its querencia, and Bailarinito's heart ticked with the precious minutes, for he was very anxious to make a kneeling pass, which is always a favourite with audiences, and which he might try if he could wear the bull down sufficiently to begin with.

When they got the bull out, he tried a natural, but managed to muf it, had to take to his heels, and the volatile and wholly unreliable crowd changed its tune. A series of passes went wrong after this, and somehow the bull got back into its querencia, which warned Bailarinito he must lose no time over the killing.



He had got the muleta in his right hand, and transferred it to the left, while his banderilleros were sweating over the business of getting the bull out again. It was standing mulishly, refusing to be coaxed, betraying the men into close approach, and putting an end to their games by jabbing forward and sideways with its horns. Its head had come down, the shoulder was a dark, shining puddle, and its feet were a little spread. As all Bailarinito's passes, whether successful or otherwise, had been aimed at weakening the muscles on the right, which it apparently preferred to use, its jabs to the right were now weak and uncertain in direction, but its left hook was still formidable, and the most they could do with it on that side was to cite from a safe distance; it knew enough, as they continued, to shift round and attack its aggressors with the left, although without leaving the querencia.

As the minutes passed, Bailarinito became more and more furious. He even contemplated the fatal act of going in to kill in the bull's own ground, which would certainly have meant a bad goring, if nothing worse. He had no gift for appreciating the fight as a whole, or the part played by others in a spectacle of which he was supposed to be the central figure.

Suddenly there was a muffled shout, as the bull, issuing suddenly from its querencia, caught Luis between its horns and flung him for several yards on the sands. While he lay there, Bailarinito ran in and drew the bull's head straight into the muleta, executing a very clean turn, and dismissing the bull with a forward thrust at the end. He managed this twice in succession, and then decided, suddenly, to kill. The fluctuating tide of popular opinion was now again running in his favour, and it would be making the most of his opportunity to finish the suerte as quickly as possible, without risking the blowing of the trumpet which would cheat him of his climax.

He therefore drew the sword out of the folds of the muleta, and cited attentively. The bull was standing stolidly facing him; it looked half asleep; the sand was dark beside its right fore-foot, down which a sad stream was running; almost meek it looked. Yet it started its charge as Bailarinito himself began running.

He would have done well to have let it charge; but, whether from vanity or misapprehension—believing the bull to be weaker than it actually was—he tried to do the thing he had set out to do; there was a shock, and a glitter in the air, as the sword went spinning and the banderilleros ducked out of the line of its descent.

The tumult of whistling and catcalling beat about Bailarinito's ears as he went to receive his second sword, and made them burn. A bottle, a cushion or two, fell into the ring, and just missed him as he approached the barrera. The cuadrilla was working like maniacs to keep the bull away from its querencia; the flutter of capes was like a dance of pink butterflies across the sand. He was in such a rage when he returned that he lost all sense of seemliness; a hurricane greeted an estocada that struck bone and inflicted a barbarous gash, and, in his flurry, Bailarinito practically repeated the performance a second time, whereat there were yells of 'Assassin!' and many of the spectators rose to their feet, howling their resentment of his lack of skill.

The sympathy of the audience was now entirely with the bull; partly on account of Bailarinito's fumbling, and partly affected by the marked way in which the bull had changed its character during the latter part of the fight: how, as the action progressed, it had rejected its treacheries, its meannesses, and become, with the waning of its strength, honest and noble—like a sneak-thief driven in a corner and desperately flinging away the disguises forced upon him by his profession, in the hope of pardon, or simply because there is nothing else to do. In the face of death, man's true character asserts itself, and it was so with the bull, who seemed in a single gesture to renounce all that was base and to face its approaching end, of which it was visibly aware, with a clean courage.

A fearful, cold sobriety now came over Bailarinito, worthy of El Bailarín himself. There was one way, and only one, by which he could save his face, could wipe out the memory of his artistic crimes. His father was vividly in his mind as he thought of it: El Bailarín, the last of the great recibiendo killers—those who

stood still on their two feet and allowed the bull to commit suicide upon the sword. It was a style of killing that had practically vanished; few matadors nowadays had the courage to attempt it, and there were probably not ten people present who had ever seen it done. By doing this thing, he could perform an act of purification that would nullify his disgrace.

He had never before attempted it: largely because the bulls had not been the kind capable of this finale. But this animal, which still carried fury in its charges, and seemed as though it might be immortal, invited such an end with its own implacability.

The fact that if he failed it would almost certainly mean death hardly crossed Balarinito's mind. He had the poorest possible power of visualizing death. It just happened that, by one of those curious chances that govern men's lives, he had never been in the ring when a man was killed, although he had seen several gorings, and had experienced a few unimportant ones himself. He could read of a matador being killed with no more emotion than was covered by a shrug of the shoulders and a laconic '*Mala suerte!*' His courage was of the kind that derives absolutely from a sense of physical fitness, and his former lapses were due mainly to a lack of confidence engendered by a temporary loss of stamina caused by his excesses. He was now in faultless condition, and his mind held no idea save that of restoring his prestige, for his own sake.

He had the sense to know that he was doing a very important and almost unheard-of thing, as the hooting and catcalling rose to a frenzy at the moment he offered the muleta to the bull. He hardly heard them, for his mind was, for once, completely on what he was doing. He did not think of the audience, or of individuals among the audience, to wonder whether he was impressing them or exciting their admiring emotions. He centred upon doing a thing because it had to be done, and the hush that suddenly fell as the spectators grasped his intent affected him no more than the hullabaloo that had preceded it.

He profiled; waved the muleta gently; the bull started; he raised the sword with a steady movement.

The sound of the crack was lost in the shuffle of two thousand people rising to their feet. Bull and man became one; the head of the bull went up, with a silver doll dangling on the horn. Two tosses—the doll was still there; the third toss—it described a ludicrous cart-wheel in the air, to fall spread-eagled on the sand. It staggered to its feet, with both hands pressed to its chest, coughed, and pitched forward on its face, to lie still in the darkening sand.

El Bailarín, who had sat like a rock throughout the whole incident, turned his ghastly smile to Don Alonso—the latter crimson and white in patches, with tears rolling down his handsome, genial face.

‘That kill—they should not attempt it nowadays.’

There was a great rush from those in the vicinity of Don José to get to him; incoherent expressions of sympathy and horror poured from many lips. Clarissa was standing up, tearing the ends of her mantilla: a noise like laughter came from her throat, but her face was as blank as the face of an idiot; several people went to support her, but she flung them aside, scrambling towards the gangway, while Juan, green in the face, had left Pilár to Felipa, and was trying to fight his way down the stands to his father’s side. As he did so, Bailarinito was being carried up the gangway, and Don Alonso, gripping the arm of Don José between elbow and shoulder, was helping him to thrust through the obstructive crowd of sympathizers.

Juan trembled in the passage-way to the infirmary. He did not know whether to claim his rights of relationship or not; two banderilleros of Moreno’s cuadrilla were standing close beside him in the semi-darkness; neither recognized him. They lifted their shoulders, looked at one another, pulled down the corners of their mouths, and one lit a cigarette. The Pressmen came running; one was dragging out his Kodak as he ran; they jostled Juan in the doorway; as the door swung open, an overpowering stench of ether and iodoform came out.

The passage was filling with people: their faces were hard with curiosity and excitement. ‘Is he dead?’ ‘*Hombre*, you don’t

take a crack like that and recover from it!' The jingle of the mule teams sounded somewhere close at hand; the bull had been killed, Balarinito's cuadrilla arrived, running; as they came into the passage, smelling of sweat and blood, the trumpet rang faintly from afar: Ramonito was going in for his first bull.

Someone was pressing against Juan's side; he moved away, resenting the contact. They brought Clarissa: she was now having hysterics; her whoops and screams rang under the low vaulted roof of the passage; a doctor came out and spoke to her sharply, and her cries subdued themselves to hiccups; clutching his arm, she passed in through the door. All sorts of people were going in, Juan noticed; everyone, seemingly, save himself.

A hand was laid heavily on his shoulder; he could hardly believe, when he looked round, that it was Miguel. His brother's face peered at him through the darkness.

'What are you doing here, *niño*? Why aren't you helping to swell the hullabaloo inside?' The harsh, sardonic voice pulled Juan together; he thrust his hands into his pockets, so that Miguel should not observe their trembling.

'There seemed to be enough without me,' he answered, with an assumption of manly callousness.

'All the same, like me, you hadn't quite the strength of mind to stay right out of the way,' grimaced Miguel.

'No, not quite.'

'It was a good death,' said Miguel critically. 'A brave death. And very silly. Anyhow, no one can ever say Balarinito was frightened. He hadn't brains to be anything but brave.'

'He's dead—then?' Juan spoke dry-lipped. How could Miguel know? He had only seen as much as other people.

'You saw. How else could it be? If he's not dead now, he will be by sunset. I hope he's dead. Pain's such a worthless thing.'

'I—did—it.' To Juan the words appeared to be shouted; they seemed to ring and ring under the vaultings, to echo and echo down the tunnels that led to the ring; presently they would go rolling round the ring itself: 'I did it; I killed my brother.' But, as Miguel made no rejoinder, he cast at him a look of

apprehension, and saw, to his astonishment, that he had not heard. Had the words, then, not actually been spoken? Was all that echo and ringing taking place only in his brain?

'I think I'll go in,' said Miguel, with a shrug and a grimace.

Without a word Juan followed him. The infirmary walls, glittering with their hard white under the electric bulbs, smote on his eyeballs. The holland-covered couches in the first room were unoccupied, and the room itself empty. A farther door was open, and a great babble of voices came out, on whose crest rose the shrill sobs of Clarissa. It was impossible to see the operating-table, on which they had laid Balarinito, for the ring of doctors, Pressmen, and photographers that surrounded it; a flashlight photograph had evidently just been taken, for there was a cloud and an acrid scent of magnesium in the air, the nurses were still feeling if their caps had been straight at the moment of the flash; a tall priest stood at the end of the table, holding a crucifix high in both hands, and reciting the prayers for the dying. 'What a drama we make of death!' whispered Miguel. 'A thing that's no more important than finishing a circle. By the smell of things, they've got him under chloroform.'

Suddenly Juan saw his father. Don José's face was purple, with pouches of reddish skin under the eyes. He stood in the middle of a group of his friends, and, for the first time in his life, Juan saw his father publicly in disarray; his hair ruffled, his clothing displaced. Don Alonso had his hand kindly on his shoulder, but Don José appeared unaware of it.

'You saw? You saw it—all of you?' His glance ploughed among them, going from man to man, seeking acknowledgment of something: the look of a man who has beheld something supernatural and desires to receive confirmation of his vision from his companions. 'You saw the salute my son gave me in dying? "See, father!" he cried. "They have said evil things of me; their malice and envy have pursued me like devils from the day I started. But in this one act I reveal myself the Messiah they denied! For you, my father, I make this noble death, that you may know that they have lied, and that I have maintained

uncorrupted the nobility that you bequeathed to me!" Before the Most High God, those were my son's last words, which he cried to me from the horn of the bull: and henceforward may the curse of God lie upon him that speaks ill of my son, Bailarinito.'

Miguel limped towards his father, in the pause during which the latter gasped for breath, and, in a much gentler voice than Juan had ever heard him use, said:

'I will come home with you, if you like, father.'

Don José raised his head, and an expression of cold repulsion and denial swept across his ravaged face.

'You are nothing to me,' he said, in a voice that held a knife-edge. His sneer intensified itself as he swept Miguel from head to foot with a glance whose cruelty spoke more clearly than words: 'Do you imagine that you—you, miserable specimen that you are—could take the place of Pepe?'

Miguel's mouth preserved its hard, impassive line; his down-dropped eyes revealed nothing of what he felt, or did not feel, at this reception of his olive-branch; he merely understood that his father had taken his offer to conduct him to the casa as a suggestion that Miguel was willing to come home for good, and the misunderstanding did not seem worth correcting. It was Juan who, before he could control it, drew a long, audible, shuddering breath which brought his father's attention upon him.

'And you,' said Don José—and everyone listening knew this time it was a madman who spoke—'you will start at the school at Malaga immediately.'

## Twenty-Two

**D**ON'T BE A FOOL, *niño*. You know he did not mean it. He is beside himself, and he has nothing in himself that can help him, now this has come along. He is a sore animal, crazy with pain, that has not the sense to leave its sores alone. Why, I might as reasonably take to heart his plain intimation that I am too miserable a creature to replace Bailarinito. You should be flattered at being offered the throne of the dead king!

'You're wrong, Miguel; he means it. I am to go to Malaga at the end of the week.'

'Well, then—go.'

'Go? I?'

'Why not? You can do it, if you choose.'

The two boys had met upon the hillside above the little solitary church of San Miguel; Miguel had reached it on donkey-back from his mysterious lodging, whose whereabouts he had not communicated even to Juan; and Juan had scrambled up through the Albaicin. There was no living creature save the donkey within sight or sound of them; no movement save the stirring of the grasses, still beaten and brown in patches from the August feria. Above them the hillside climbed in calm, burnt-lavender-coloured terraces towards the primula sky, a faint wash of pink blurring and connecting them both. Below, it shot precipitously into an ill-defined chasm of darkness. The sky was a wild rhythm of magenta, scarlet, vermilion, and crimson, and against which the cloud-banks repeated and elaborated the design of the Sierras: their summits breaking into scattered flakes of gold, delicate as



feathers, their bases sodden with the weight of colour they had to carry. At intervals, as though a mighty hand squeezed crimson from the clouds, the whole horizon was flooded with a raw, malignant cinnabar; saffron flashed from some chance association of sulphur with carmine, and was quenched in the sinister oncoming of a bank of umber and violet, whose sunward extremities were stained with the damask of a full-blown rose. Curve breaking into curve snatched some fresh subtlety from its variations; divine transparencies, hardly visible to the eye, floating across some patch of positive colour, changed to fire-opal the candid carmine or yellow, or even left a trail of antique green to fade upon the rest. The strangely sculptured rim of the mountains rose sacramentally as a cup designed to receive the distillation of the holy wine, and all of the plain was misted over with gridelin, like the bloom on fruit.

Sensitive as both normally were to the eternal miracle of Spanish sunset, neither had eyes for it to-night. Miguel was in physical pain, from the strain of riding the donkey, which stood in meek hopelessness at a little distance; and Juan, already half demented, with eyes that glittered from their dark sockets, sat with his back to the sunset and his face towards the cold pinnacles of the Nevada mountains; his face shone with the whiteness of bone, and all flesh seemed to have withdrawn from it. A mere frail skull moved on the fragile stalk of his neck; there was something spectral in his thin, hunched figure, something that disturbed Miguel, for all his harshness.

'So you desert me too?' muttered Juan, across the blade of grass he was chewing.

'How you dramatize yourself!' scoffed Miguel. 'Ought I not to be in Madrid at this very moment, and I have actually neglected my comrades in order to meet you here to-night? You are so worthless sometimes—you make me sick.'

'I know I am worthless,' answered Juan almost cringingly. 'That is why I cannot bear the idea of going to Malaga. What is El Balarín preparing for himself but another humiliation? My cowardice is in me, like my blood in my arteries, and I cannot

get rid of it. Why cannot he see that if he sends me into the bull-ring I shall shame him—worse than Balarinito? And why must I be sacrificed to a thing I loathe and deprecate with every breath I draw? What have I done to have such a thing happen to me?’

‘Whom are you asking questions of? Is it my place to answer for the power that is behind El Balarín’s plans for you? If you feel you simply cannot do it, why can’t you go to him honestly and say so? He loves you; his love for you is hardly second to his love for Balarinito. After the funeral he will be easier to talk to.’

‘I—can’t!’ gasped Juan. ‘Partly because—even under his harshness of the last few weeks—I know that he loves me so much. It would be a different matter if I were you, Miguel,’ he ended, innocent of any desire to wound. Miguel’s laughter crackled in the silence.

‘Oh, I could say anything to El Balarín, without its having any more effect on his feelings than this ground we are sitting on; I know that,’ he retorted. ‘But you must steel yourself. Some things are only to be had at the price of a little suffering. I think myself it would be better if you hurt his feelings than if you disgraced him.’

‘I—cannot inflict—pain,’ whispered Juan, lowering his head so that his face was hidden. ‘I cannot ruin my father as I ruined Balarinito.’

‘What? What imbecility have you got in your head now?’

‘I cursed him. I cursed my brother. There may be no God,’ cried Juan suddenly, ‘but there is most certainly a devil! A devil who listens to curses.’

‘You know, you are really out of your mind,’ said Miguel quietly. ‘Pull yourself together! Curse Balarinito! I’ve cursed him many a time myself. A lot of notice he would take of your cursing him! And what vanity on your part to think that he should!’

‘Balarinito always believed in good and bad omens,’ shrilled Juan. ‘You know that all the matadors do. I do not say that the

curse actually came true in the bull-ring; but that Bailarinito got himself killed because he was worrying about it—it was in the back of his mind; it took his attention off the bull.

‘Oh, be quiet. Can’t you rid yourself of these analyses of yours? They are always wrong; you are not old enough and you have not had enough experience to be able to judge what people are thinking. Bailarinito never thought of anything but himself and the bull—himself first: how grand he looked, and how the women were admiring him, and how much better he fought than anyone else. Those were Bailarinito’s thoughts in the ring, if you’ll take my word for it. But perhaps you are getting too old and too independent in your views to pay attention to what I say,’ sneered Miguel.

‘Why are you so cruel to me, Miguel?’ asked Juan, raising his dolorous head.

‘Because I love you so much and you make me so angry. I cannot bear your mixture of folly and intelligence,’ replied Miguel frankly. ‘Not that I blame you for it; it is the natural outcome of the outrageous way you have been brought up. What did you curse Bailarinito for?’ he asked curiously.

‘I cursed him on account of Pilár,’ muttered Juan.

‘Then you were making yourself finely ridiculous!’

‘It was a betrayal.’

‘How fond you are of high-sounding words! What do you think those two would have done together? Oh, all the trouble would not have been on the girl’s side. The animals also have their way of living and their right to enjoy their lives; and who shall deny them either? With women, Bailarinito was just an animal, and there are plenty of women like him, who could have enjoyed what he gave them and been satisfied by it, and let him alone. He was very unlucky in his women: first Pilár, and now the American, who may be an animal, but she is a bad animal, and Pepe would have got no good out of her.’

‘Pilár is utterly good and noble! Pepe was not good enough for her, but he had no right to act as he did.’

‘Have you never heard of people being poisoned by good

things? Pilár would have been poison for Bailarinito—slow poison. It is never good when a normal and an abnormal person come together. Pilár is an abnormal: I tell you she is a freak! She's the living embodiment of the Church's sin against human nature; her hands are as cold as the holy vessels, and her——'

'Hold your tongue!' shouted Juan, trembling from head to foot.

'Her cursed chastity,' went on Miguel, shouting even louder than Juan, in the grip of some inexplicable rage, 'helped to destroy Bailarinito, and now you are getting ready to let it destroy you! You're in love with her, aren't you?'

'If you weren't my brother—and—and——'

'And a cripple,' prompted Miguel amiably.

'—I should thrash you!'

'Oh, don't be such a braggart, *niño*! I may be a cripple, but with a twist of my wrist I could splinter your arm. So you *are* in love with Pilár.'

'If you want to know, I would die for her.'

'Women prefer men to live for them,' said Miguel gently. 'And either way it is bad. One should not centre one's life in anything that is clothed in flesh. That is what El Bailarín has done. The only safe and reasonable love is the honest physical love a man and a woman have for each other's bodies. This cerebralism of yours—this moonshine-and-balcony stuff you are wasting on Pilár—is an outrage on your own manhood. Why don't you turn your brains to account, *niño*? Why can't you devote them to the service of a crusade which is crying out for supporters with brains as well as brawn, and ideals as well as ambition?'

'You don't understand. . . . I am broken, I am weak. I don't want to do things; up to now I have wanted to feel and write about them.'

'You want to sit on a grass bank, twanging a guitar. That's about what it comes to. Well, *niño*, I can't be angry with you, as I should if you were not my little brother. You're very charming with it! You are a true Andalu'; you only want the sunshine

and you don't care for anyone but yourself. I would applaud your state of mind, if the country was not in such bitter need.'

'You said poets were wanted.'

'Yes, but they must have the pen in one hand and the sword in the other. Your hands don't look as if they could handle anything heavier than a goose-feather!'

'Insult me as you like; I am nothing.'

'How I wish I could beat you!' said Miguel softly. 'Wake up! You are in some sort of a nightmare. You are contemptible!'

'I'm not in a nightmare, Miguel; I'm in hell.'

'There is no hell,' mocked Miguel. 'And no heaven. Blessed discovery! If that does not make a man of you, nothing will. Say to yourself, "I stand up alone, naked in my righteousness! My strength is my own, and I will learn to use it so as to get the best out of everything. I am myself, a solitary grain of stardust, flung on this earth, and I am answerable to nobody. I have the right to do what I choose with my own ethos, which came to me out of space, no one knows how—although in time, so wise is mankind becoming, the secret of creation may be revealed, even to *me*! I am alone—alone—alone! How magnificent it is to be alone!"'

Juan leapt to his feet, and stood over his brother; his hands clenched and unclenched themselves with convulsive movements of the muscles that communicated themselves to his whole body; his face, dashed with the blaze of the sky, had something superhuman in it, something destructive and horrible that devastated its beauty.

'Give it back to me! You've taken it from me!'

'Give what back?'

'My belief—in everything! You've broken it all—everything I had is broken.'

'One must break to remake,' said Miguel rapidly. The deformity of his body made it impossible for him to look up into Juan's face, so directly above him. 'I have broken you as one breaks a sealed vessel with poison in it—to let the poison out, the

abominable poison they've put into you ever since you were born. I did it because you are my brother.'

'Can the vessel mend itself?' cried Juan bitterly.

'Who wants it to be mended? New wine needs a new bottle.'

Juan gave a scream, putting his hands to his head.

'If there is no God we are all lost—we are spinning about and smashing each other—no one to care—nothing to call upon—'

'Nothing to fear,' put in Miguel quietly. 'Don't be a fool. We have ourselves. Isn't it enough?'

'I am not enough to myself! I am afraid to be alone—afraid of this Power of yours—I cannot be alone—I must have something—I must have——' His voice broke on a shriek.

'What do you want as a bull-fighter? What do you think Bailarinito had, for all the medals he was always jingling, and the prayers he gabbled in the chapel before he went into the ring? Did any of those avail him in the end? Did the knowledge that he had Nuestra Señora de las Angustias in his pocket, and an odd invocation of his patron saint on his lips, spare him one atom of the fear and horror of death—of pain as the bull's horn crashed into his lung? Did those things cheer him up when he went into the ring to face an ugly beast, or one of his cuadrilla let him down? Not they! What served him then? His knowledge of his own strength and shrewdness. What did he regret in dying, when Don Antonio was gabbling the last sacraments over him? That he hadn't been a better Catholic? Not he! That he'd been such a fool, fool, fool as not to try that recibiendo kill first upon a simpler bull than the one that got him. Bailarinito was a fool in some ways, but not like that; he carried his medals, as a man carries a mascot on a motor-car, to bring him good luck; but if the luck failed, or if it succeeded, do you think he gave credit to his bits of gold or silver?'

A look of eery cunning came over Juan's face; he allowed himself again to drop on the grass, and he gave a little laugh as though he recognized the foolishness of his outburst.

'Of course, one knows that those things are only meant to symbolize the idea,' he said, in a careful voice.

'Which is worth less than the symbol!' sneered Miguel. 'You must see why I hate the Church, *niño*—with your intelligence. I loathe it for a thing that cuts the roots of man's liberty and independence: his right of self-government, his ethical judgment, his common sense, his possession and rights over his own body.'

'Do you consider that a man has complete right over his body?' enquired Juan, with an assumed carelessness.

'So long as his desires are not anti-social—yes,' replied Miguel.

'Then,' said Juan, choosing his words, 'you would feel it your duty—I mean, it would seem to you quite the right thing to do—to help someone to—to exert a right over his body—that he could not do alone?'

'I cannot imagine what you mean—but I suppose so.'

'And how far, should you say, his rights extended?'

'Oh, you with your measured sentences!' said Miguel, with a laugh that was not quite easy. 'You might be studying law! What are you getting at? Speak out plainly.'

Juan began again to tremble; in order to speak he seized his lower jaw, which was chattering, between his fingers; his eyes stared sombrely at Miguel.

'I have decided—that I will—k-kill myself.'

'Do you wish me to produce an ethical justification of it?' enquired Miguel after a pause. But he kept the satire out of his voice.

'No—no—a deed that carries no punishment—that only affects oneself—doesn't require justification,' stammered Juan. 'There's nothing after death—aren't people ridiculous to be afraid of it? I've even been afraid of it myself—how stupid that was I see it quite clearly now. It's like escaping from a cage—it's wonderful! *Ma-a-adre de D-Dios*, it's wonderful! I don't know wh-what's happened but my fear has all gone. Miguel—thank you—my fear has—all—gone. . . .'

'Let us discuss this,' came Miguel's calm voice, from the grass upon which now his head was laid. Between his tented knees he looked up at the tender sky. 'I do not deny,' he began, in a

voice of the lecture-room, a voice he had learned at the Sacro Monte, 'that a man has, in given circumstances, the right to take his own life.' Juan nodded. 'To deny that would be to deny one of the most powerful articles of my own belief, which is man's supremacy over himself. No, I do not deny that at all. There are probably any number of people who would better fulfil their duty to the earth which has suffered them by fertilizing some patch of ground where an olive-tree might grow. It is largely a matter of whether a man, out of some profound conviction that he cannot, by living, benefit either himself or the society he moves in, or merely through having lost all taste for the complexities of life, decides that he is justified in ending an unprofitable existence without waiting for the moment decreed by Nature for his personal end.'

'Or if he suffers too much.'

'Suffering,' said Miguel, with a sidelong look, 'I look upon as a poor motive for suicide. Under the influence of emotion probably hysterical—no. It can only be defensible when it is quite cold-blooded. Then it will be grave, reasonable, and possibly quite noble, in its way.'

Juan had ceased listening; his arms now clasped round his knees, he was chattering quietly, his words making an under-current to Miguel's slow phrases.

'I have quite made up my mind that I cannot bear it any longer. I am absolutely alone, because my father will have nothing further to do with me, after I tell him I cannot go to Malaga. And there would be no point in my going to Malaga, because I am terrified of bulls and nothing could ever make me kill one. I am completely and utterly a coward, and my poetry is worthless because there are at least a million poets in Spain. I have helped to kill Balarinito. Pilar does not, and will never, care for me the way I care for her. I am of absolutely no value to any living creature. Tomás—perhaps; but I cannot live for Tomás. I therefore mean to kill myself. There is no God, nor anyone to be angry with me for what I am doing. The only thing is *how*. If I only were not so deadly frightened of pain!



The very thought of doing anything to myself makes me sick. How few people there are who live up to what they call their convictions! Do you, Miguel? Do you?’

‘I keep as few convictions as possible,’ returned Miguel ironically. ‘So that I may have less trouble in living up to them. If you mean that, on my theory that every man has a right to dispose of his life as he wishes, I am going to help you to kill yourself, you must be completely crazy.’

‘It would be such a little thing to do!’ Juan, panting a little, drew a clasp-knife out of his pocket; he feverishly pulled at the stiff blade. ‘Look, I mean like this: there is a vein somewhere in one’s wrist—if you cut it you bleed to death! I read about it in a book. But I’m so cowardly about pain!’ He was whimpering a little, like the small Juan who had whimpered as a baby when he fell and grazed his knees on the uneven ground outside his door. Miguel, with a rush of that tenderness which is usually called maternal, but which is not confined to either sex, had a powerful desire to pull the little brother’s head against his bosom and rock him in his arms. ‘If you would do it for me, Miguel! If you would just jab the point in—quickly! And then you could ride away on the donkey and just let it happen—it would have happened before the dark came.’

‘Wait,’ said Miguel, holding the hot and trembling hand firmly in his. The only way to overcome this situation, to bring sanity back to the clouded brain, was to have patience, to reason. ‘Do you believe I love you?’

‘I do; and I know you have too much sense to—to make death an important thing,’ stammered Juan. ‘If I did not trust your love for me I could not trust you to do this.’

‘Very well,’ said Miguel sharply. ‘Do you know that what you are suggesting is not suicide at all? Do you know you are asking me to murder you—a thing for which I could be hanged?’

A look of confusion and horror slowly dawned on the boy’s face; he put his hand up to his head.

‘Oh—what shall I do?’ He looked wildly about him, making up his mind to some desperate thing. ‘Very well, very well. I

will do it myself. Only show me which is the vein, so that I shall not make a mistake. I could not bear to make a mistake.'

Miguel bent his head over the fragile wrist that was offered: the sight of the small bones, the tenderly sallow skin with a clear blue tracery running through it, for a moment choked his utterance; he did not even notice Juan flinch from the sudden grip that tightened on his fingers. There was a silence, broken only by the faintest whispering of the grasses, all brushed sideways by the wind that freshened upon these slopes. Suddenly Miguel threw his head up, and with a furious gesture pointed to the west. The last rim of the sun left a thread of supernatural gold upon a black escarpment; a clear scarlet like the juice of pomegranates dripped from the edges of the clouds that had piled themselves in a great blossom-like formation over the horizon.

'You fool! How can you look at that and say there is no God? When have I ever told you there was no God? There is Very God Itself—no Jehovah of the Church, but the glorious and blessed Essence of Creation, the Force that is responsible for all that was and is and shall be! Will you renounce your share in that magnificence—the privilege which is yours to look upon the dawns and the moonrises—the eternal miracle of day and night? If so, you are a fool, fool, fool, and you deserve every damnation your miserable superstition can devise for you! Bow down your head and worship That which is to be worshipped—That was worshipped before the Christians corrupted the earth with their debile creed! You've got no cantrip of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to learn in order to worship That! No Virgin Birth to swallow as the last anodyne to your aching intelligence! No confession, no penance, no indulgence. There is the True God, That asks nothing save to be acknowledged in Its glory. Its temple is every world, every star, that spins in the firmament; no element can contain It, for It is all elements. It has your life and mine in Its womb and by Its implacable power that knows no favour, and neither asks nor hears a prayer, our lives are directed. Stand up and worship That, and rejoice in your own share in It.'

Juan drew a long, shuddering breath, and, as though hypnotized by Miguel's violent words, staggered to his feet. His face was that of a somnambulist, just coming out of his sleep; he lifted his hands a little way, palms upward, as though in response to an inaudible summons, then pitched forward and lay on his face in the grass.

It was a long time before Miguel attempted to revive him. All the colour had faded and the hill-slopes were blotted out. A group of cactus-plants, silhouetted upon a near ridge, spread out their odd fans against the lesser darkness like antic figures cut out of black paper.

'Juan, Juan. It is cold; the dew is falling.'

'I'm not asleep,' said Juan.

'I know. You fainted.'

'Did I? I thought I felt queer—sick, you know, and as if someone had cut the tendons of my wrists and knees. Miguel, I have been thinking.'

'Then think on your feet,' answered Miguel roughly, as he scrambled painfully to his own. 'You'll have to help me on to that ass. Not so fine a mount as the one you lent me at Sanpedro!'

'I can't go back to the casa.'

'What?'

'You must see it's impossible. Father—Don Antonio—Pilar—it's altogether impossible.'

'I believe you are right,' admitted Miguel after a pause, trying to peer at Juan's face in the dark. 'Well, what do you propose doing?'

'Can't you think?' Juan's voice had an odd note in it.

'I suppose you want me to take you with me,' said Miguel slowly. 'Put it out of your mind. There is no question of it.'

'Why?' persisted Juan.

'For one thing, in spite of your age, you are still a child. You have no stamina of any kind. I can twist you about with a turn of my little finger. There isn't any stability in you.'

'If I stay at home, there never will be,' retorted Juan, with unusual tenacity. 'Take me with you, Miguel, and make me your disciple!'

Miguel's laugh came out of the darkness, but not unkindly.

'What an eye you have for the picturesque!'

'Part of your object must be to make converts to your way of thinking,' persisted Juan.

'A splendid convert you would be! I can just see you in a street brawl, handling a gun and shaking too much to use it.'

'You cannot expect all your people to use guns. Every political movement needs its people behind the scenes—its messengers, its spies,' ended Juan lamely. This time, Miguel's laughter was unbridled.

'We are all spies and all messengers, if it suits our purpose. You had better keep clear of politics; you would not be the least use to us. Besides, you have no convictions.'

'It would be part of your work to give me convictions, Miguel,' said Juan.

'A nice addition to my labours! No, *niño*, so far as I am concerned you can keep your monarchism until something happens to convert you as suddenly and irrevocably—as you were converted an hour ago,' ended Miguel. 'You are a singer of songs, a composer of pretty flamenco verses, an Andalucian romancist—the worst type in the world to fit into a scheme like ours, which is founded on hard realities. If you have to leave home you had better come along with me to Madrid and let me introduce you to my friend Moras, and see if he can find anything for you.'

'Oh, Miguel, do you mean you will take me?'

'How will you live?' questioned Miguel, standing still. 'You have not thought of that, I suppose, with your head up in air? Food and lodgings will just float into your poetic way, I suppose, and you will graciously condescend to make use of them?'

'How do you live yourself?' countered Juan. A short laugh came out of the dark.

'You would be surprised to see how some of us live. We are good to one another—as good as our means will allow. There are only two of my group who have allowances from their homes, and the rest of us are very particular about not sponging upon them. That is, we only do it when we are obliged; when, for

example, we are so weak from lack of food that it is impossible for us to do our work properly.'

'Miguel! Have you——?'

'I am stronger than a good many of them; half of them are tuberculous and they have a hard time. Sometimes we act as waiters in cafés; one of us is a shoeblack—I remember a day when I blacked shoes myself.'

'Miguel!'

'Yes, that's funny, isn't it? The son of El Bailarín, blacking shoes in Madrid. I did very well, too, because my back made people sorry for me, and you know it is lucky to touch a hunchback! I blacked Villalta's shoes for him that day, and, when I was bending over, I felt him reach out and touch my shoulder very lightly. Oh, he was very tactful about it! And he killed magnificently that afternoon—I'm sure he put it down to my back! I hung about the bull-ring afterwards, thinking he might remember and chuck me a duro, but the crowd was too thick—I expect he did not see me. It's nice to make money out of the superstition of intrepid fools like Villalta.'

'Yes, most of us are poor,' went on Miguel, as he fumbled with the ass's bridle in the dark. 'Of course, we have a few moneyed people in the group, because every movement has its expenses; but it is better on the whole to be poor—one can get nearer the people, further into their confidence. I lodge at a baker's; it is nice and warm—it was too hot during the warm weather, and I slept on a bench out of doors—and there are cockroaches as long as across your knuckles. On two nights a week I have a class of bootblacks and paper-sellers; I am teaching them to read or write, but it is very slow work, because their brains are as starved as their bodies, and once or twice I have stolen pieces of stale bread to give them before we start our work. The baker is a good fellow, of our colour, and no doubt he would give us the bread, but I steal it for practice! One never knows—I might have to steal something important one day.'

The matter-of-fact revelation of Miguel's way of living went like a shaft of thin steel into the impressionable depths of Juan's

character. In silence he shouldered his brother on to the ass; in silence they started upon the downward slant of the hill bearing left, in the direction of the Sacro Monte.

'This is out of your way; you should be going straight down.'

Juan's hand tightened with a little shake upon the bridle.

'I am coming with you.'

'Where? You can't. I am going to sleep with a gipsy.'

'Take me with you!' pleaded Juan; his heart cried, 'Make a man of me! Make me what you are yourself!'

Miguel gave a low laugh.

'You must find your own mistress, little brother. Anyhow, all that is quite important. Sooner or later you will find out how unimportant it is.'

'To some people,' ventured Juan, thinking of Tomás, and tremulously relieved to be speaking of such a matter to Miguel, 'it is very important indeed—almost the most important thing. They say that, until one has done that, one is not a man.'

'Those are the fools who have all their values wrong,' said Miguel contemptuously. 'It is only important in the way hunger and thirst are important: in making a claim on Nature which has to be satisfied. Is not a man a glutton who eats when he is not hungry?'

'And—love?' asked Juan shyly.

'We have no time for love,' was Miguel's harsh reply. 'I mean, not for the personal love. Our love is dedicated to the suffering brotherhood of mankind; our love is on mortgage, and we have none to spare until we have paid to the last centimo of our interest. We must not weaken ourselves with personal attachments, for by doing so we betray those who look to us for their salvation. I am guilty of betrayal to-night, because, instead of carrying out my duty to the comrades, I have stayed behind to talk with you. I do not want you with me, lest you should lead me into other betrayals.'

'Yet I am coming with you to-morrow to Madrid.' Juan was astonished by the decision in his own voice. 'I can at least do as you are doing; I can teach people to read and write.'

'That is quite true,' said Miguel, and his slow and considering tone made Juan's heart leap. 'I had not thought of that. The people must be taught. We can do nothing with them until they have learnt something. It is no use preaching freedom to a class that is victimized by its own ignorance of its rights. But how will you live? What shall I do with you if you get sick? You would be a burden upon the movement. You would make my work more difficult because I should be torn continually between my responsibility to the work and my responsibility for you.' His arm rested momentarily upon Juan's shoulder. 'Your body is a bunch of nerves, and the least thing knocks you over.'

'No, you are wrong; I have not been like that at all since I came back from Sanpedro.'

'With Felipa cossetting you all the time,' went on Miguel, with affectionate raillery, 'you have never had a chance to learn how to look after yourself.'

'*Madre de Dios*, isn't it time I learnt? I am coming, and I shall find some way of supporting myself; I could perhaps be an assistant in a bookshop.'

'Have done with your romancing!' said Miguel curtly. 'What do you think Madrid is—a benevolent organization, which holds out loving arms to young men from the country? I suppose you do not know that even your speech is all wrong. In Madrid they do not speak as we do. They move quickly; the customers do not wish to be served with a kilo of poetry and philosophy when they come in for a ball of string. The employers demand exactitude, not some poetic computation of the *probable* receipts during the day. No one is going to fall upon your neck and succour you because you happen to be the son of El Bailarín. Nor shall I be able always to help you; it may be we shall not even live together.'

The cold explicitness of his brother's words stung Juan like drops of rain.

'You do not, then, care what happens to me?'

'Yes, I care,' replied Miguel. 'I care enough to wish for your sake it were possible to drag you out of this network which is

strangling your life as it strangles the lives of hundreds who have not a third of your intelligence. It enrages me that you should allow all that is rich and fine in your personality to become thinned down by an inertia which finds it easier to live among abstractions and myths and outworn conventions than to come out and face up boldly to the realities of pain, deprivation, and hardship. I tell you, I *dare* not take you; I dare not risk your ruining my own work by your weakness. For ours is a cause that has no glamour, no splendour, no magnificence, and no romance; none of the elements that attract the imaginative or hysterical supporter, and keep his enthusiasm continually at fever-pitch. We have no banners, no uniform; sometimes for months on end nothing happens—only the same dead round of teaching those who cannot learn, of going without food, of physical uncleanness; then perhaps one of us gets killed in a tussle with the Civil Guard, and there is no time to mourn for him—no funeral oration, no public tribute to a life laid down that others may live. In a few days he is forgotten, but the work goes on.’

‘I see what you mean, Miguel.’ The bald narrative, instead of quenching, had kindled Juan’s enthusiasm. ‘Let me come with you—if only on probation! I promise you I shall not be a drag on you, I will look after myself.’

‘. . . Well’—the word came after a long silence—‘on your own head be it. Let me hear you say the dedication we all have to say; repeat it after me.

‘I dedicate myself to Power.’

‘I dedicate myself to Power.’

‘To seeing clearly, to acting directly, to the rejection of all the traditional deceptions invented by mankind to preserve the mystery of the True God. And, under the direction of Power, I pledge myself to put at the disposal of my fellow creatures all my abilities, and to relinquish all personal claims that interfere with my duty to mankind.’

On the last words, Juan’s voice faltered. The monstrous fact that he was deserting his father rose before him like a spectre,



and his heart trembled. God knew he loved his father, but It also knew that nothing on earth could prevent Don José's putting into practice his intention of sending Juan to the Escuela de Tauromachía in Malaga. It was not as though the idea had sprung full-fledged out of his pain and grief at losing Bailarinito, his determination that he should still be represented in the bull-ring. It was a project of long standing, which Bailarinito's death had abruptly crystallized. No pleading could avail against that formidable combination of will and cause that directed Juan's course to Malaga. And, if he accepted his fate, it could only involve El Bailarín in a deeper shame and disgrace than ever he had known through Bailarinito.

'How are you going to let El Bailarín know?' asked Miguel abruptly.

'Is there—any—need?' stammered Juan.

'Fool! You have got to be more practical before you can be of any use to the work,' retorted Miguel. 'I suppose your idea was simply, romantically, to "vanish"? Can you see El Bailarín accepting your disappearance without setting at work all the influences at his disposal? You would next have him rooting about in our organization; you'd get the whole of us in prison.'

'Well, what am I to do?'

'A carrier has promised to take me in his van to Cordoba in the morning,' said Miguel, frowning. 'I don't know what he will have to say to two passengers, when he expects one. Have you any money in your pockets? You had better leave a note for one of the gipsies to take down to the casa after we have started. Carlota's brother will do it. We leave at seven o'clock, so mind you don't oversleep. And be careful to say nothing to El Bailarín about where we are going; simply say that in about a week's time you will be in Madrid, and for the present you are with me. That will do something to set his mind at rest, for he knows I would never forsake you.'

Juan pushed his hand into Miguel's and gave it a tight squeeze. He could hardly control the vibration in his own voice as he asked curiously, 'Where am I going to sleep, Miguel?' The

lights from the rock-dwellings of the gipsies shone out ahead of them.

'Your ordeal has started,' said Miguel sternly. 'Don't start by questioning this and that, or the carrier will leave without you in the morning. Bailarinito is doing us a service by being buried to-morrow: El Bailarín will have other matters to occupy his mind instead of hunting for you.'

'I pity him,' Juan could not help murmuring, through quivering lips.

'Cast out pity! Cast out pity! It is the worst sort of sickness, for it drains one's strength more subtly than a bleeding wound. Stand by your own actions, and righteousness will not desert you.' He broke off suddenly, and his harsh voice rose in the darkness against the clopping of the ass's small hooves.

*'Yo la saca to's las dias  
Mi jaca castaña al campo,  
Yo la saca to's las dias,  
Lo voy cantando . . .'*

Upon the faint echo of a distant 'Olé' a light figure came swirling down the dusty rambla towards them. . . .

## Epilogue

**T**HE GRAPES were forming in their clusters—bead-like malachite bunches under the protective foliage; each day the long, tedious business of thinning, carried out by sun-dazed labourers, went on from dawn to dusk along the interminable rows. Their patched cotton suits were bleached from blue or purple almost to white by the same sun that enriched the pigments of their skins, so that when the broad straw hats came up one saw faces that seemed almost as dark as a negro's, in contrast with their pale background. There would be a good vendimia; at the prospect of it they worked calmly, slowly, sleepily, now and again singing a little; at the sun's height lying down among the rows to sleep, exactly as though they had been doing this thing since the beginning of time and had all eternity in which to accomplish it. Yes, there would be a good vendimia—God take care of it, and send rain at the right time for the ripening.

The delicate air of evening stirred the palms of Aguadero, which sketched their long, pointed shadows in lilac on the pale façade of the two-storied house, whose lower frontal was cut back under arches to form a covered way. Under these arches strutted the doves, poking with their pink beaks among the cobbles for grain overlooked at their feeding-time, and two canaries, slung in an opening, indulged their long rivalry that filled the daylight hours with a continual shrill music.

Away from the shadow of the palms, carnations flamed about the base of a tall clump of arums, which withdrew their rich,

ceremonial whiteness from the dark green sheaves of their foliage with an air of princesses quitting their sombre robes of state. Beneath the palms, in the midst of a little freakish maze of dwarf myrtle, the thin silver spout of a fountain quivered upward from its basin of Moorish tiles. A grace, a modest prosperity, lay upon the garden, upon the house, whose ancient saffron roof was hazed with little flowers, too soon to be burnt away—and upon the vineyards, seen across the myrtle hedge, in whose angles stood the old citron-trees, heavy with their fruit.

Don José walked along the hedge, stopping every few steps, with his hands clasped behind his back, to survey the vineyards. Still, at Aguadero, he held by his neat, conventional clothing; no alfresco surroundings could induce him to forsake his neat suits of fine black cloth, or omit the formality of the black bow-tie that set off his spotless linen. His broad-brimmed black felt hat was still cocked faintly aslant, as though he were about to walk down and join his friends at the Café de la Alameda. There were nights when he thought he would like to be able to walk into the Alameda; when the silence of Aguadero made the blood drum in his ears; when he became almost terrified lest Don Alonso or other of his friends should break their promises to come out and spend the evening with him. And there were other nights when he sat chafing beneath his outward imperturbability, wishing that his visitors would go: would leave him alone with the many things a man has to think about.

He did not know why he had stood by his promise to buy Aguadero; both the owner and Don Alonso had shown themselves perfectly prepared to let him off his bargain when Bailarinito was killed and his plans for the future might possibly be altered. He did not know why, to what end, he was working the vineyards, having hired the previous owner's head man—whose book-keeping he overlooked with the same hard, business-like proficiency he had brought to the management of his own affairs. He could not imagine what influence had driven him into this objectless and unsympathetic occupation; for a vineyard, like any other enterprise, cannot be made to succeed if its owner is negli-

gent. He had simply, without taste or volition performed an act of reversion, he had come back to the cultivation of the land, as his parents and grandparents had done before him, as his brother now was doing at Sanpedro. The instinct was born in him; without love or interest, apart from the income it represented, he was making a success of Aguadero.

And desire had failed. What can a man desire who is haunted by ghosts? In and out of the rooms of Aguadero lounged Pepe, his hands in his pockets, his impudent smile on his lips. In and out slipped the elusive Juan, loveliest of phantoms, with a book of poems in his hand. Occasionally, more faintly, Miguel limped to a window, peering at small print with his short-sighted eyes.

When he obtained possession, and he and Felipa came out to see how much of the furniture from the Casa del Matador could fitly be conveyed to Aguadero, they went over it together, and a sort of horror dawned upon Don José as he saw the size and number of the rooms. This empty house, this echoing shell! How was he ever to bear its emptiness, now all had gone from him? The six great bedrooms, with their floors of white marble and their balconied windows. 'This will be mine,' he said, abruptly, carelessly, striking with his stick upon the marble—because it was necessary the men should be told where the furniture had to go.

'Si, señor,' she answered meekly. Her heart was raw for him, for his loneliness, the darkness of his lot.

'The one on the other side of the house, facing the road, had better be yours,' he told her abruptly.

'But, señor—your Honour!——' she stammered.

'I cannot do without you,' he muttered, as he hurried out of the room. She remained standing for a moment, with her eyes closed and her hands pressed over her heart; a light of beatification lay upon her face. She had never been to his room, nor had he invited her, since that night: and she understood perfectly that here, at Aguadero, things were to be the same. But he could not do without her! What more could a loving woman ask of God?

He was calling her sharply; she hastened to his call.

'The señorita will decide where she wants to sleep; you had

better bring her out with you to-morrow. I would have brought her to-day——' His words ceased; nor did she question him for his conclusion. 'There are three empty rooms,' he said, in a loud voice. 'They are for the boys. You understand? Just as it has always been. Pepe's and Miguel's and Juan's rooms. That is how they are to be furnished. No one else will use them.'

Pepe's, Miguel's, and Juan's rooms: one room for a boy who was dead; another for one who was under his father's ban of exile; a third for the one who, out of passionate loyalty to his brother, and to the creeds which, with a neophyte's ardour, he had embraced, had never crossed the threshold of Aguadero. Don José had pronounced no ban of exile on Juan, and perhaps the latter felt the injustice of his brother's punishment. They wrote to one another at regular but infrequent intervals, difficult letters in which the aching love of one for the other strained through the multitude of things that could not be said. Don José had no gift of writing, and there was not much Juan could tell his father about his job in a printer's office—a Communist printer's at that! All of his real life went on outside the compositors' room, and of that he could not, even had he not been forbidden by rules of the society to which he now belonged, have written to Don José: so his letters were almost as short and bald as his father's—although he always dutifully made up a list of questions about Aguadero, very few of which Don José troubled to answer; it was as though he sensed the artificiality of Juan's interest in the place and scorned to receive the comfort which the boy tried to convey.

So the rooms, with Pepe's outfits and Miguel's books and Juan's writing table—he had sent for his papers when his relationship with his father was sufficiently re-established to ask a favour—became like memorial tablets, set up to commemorate losses which time has blunted.

He talked of them much with Pilár: there was hardly an incident of Pepe's or Juan's childhood the girl did not know; of Miguel he had not much to say—because he could not; those early years had been passed in ignoring, as far as possible, the

child whose existence was a living shame to him. But, under the balm of her gentleness and strange understanding, the acid slipped away from his tongue, and he spoke, even of Miguel, with tenderness.

Don José now looked at his watch, and, frowningly, at the house. Anyone who had not seen him for a year would have said he was very much changed: his features had lost their decisive chiselling; the lines about his eyes, which had always been there, had so deepened themselves as to alter materially the expression of his face; two deep ones ran from his nostrils to the corners of his lips. Age had descended upon him, and he no longer troubled to put up a fight against it. His waistline had lost its trimness and pouched a little; it was only occasionally that he remembered to square his shoulders—when visitors were present, or when he walked into the church.

Pilár came through the little myrtle maze towards him—much as she had come at that first meeting, in her grand-mother's garden: still in black, still slender as a child of thirteen, still unconscious of her womanhood. She was as unalterable as a small waxen image in her appearance, but her serious lips were curved into a smile as she raised her brow for his kiss.

'Are you ready for me, Papa José?'

'It is you who have kept me waiting,' he responded, looking wistfully into her silver eyes.

Yes, desire had failed; it was hard to realize now that he had actually dreamed of making her his wife. That aspect of his love for her, mysteriously slain in the hour of Pepe's death, lay somewhere in the past; it did not even embarrass him to remember it. What he now felt for her was the deep and holy love of a father for his daughter, whose most precious function is to reverence and protect her virginity; that trembles sometimes before an innocence long lost to himself, and which has for its aim the gratification of all her wishes, the safeguard of her happiness. Could it have been so, he wondered, if Juan had come to Aguadero, to tease and torment him into rivalry—the ignoble rivalry of a father against his own son?

Pilár had told him, with the utmost simplicity, of Juan's love for her, and it had cost him a pang; but the girl's candour, her clear inability to understand why Juan had not been able to satisfy himself with what she was able to give him, had reassured him, while making him tremble a little for what he had himself escaped. How narrowly had the tragedy been averted which threatened him and Pilár, and at what a price! For out of her love for him he knew now she would have given him anything he had asked for; crucifying herself, if necessary, to do it.

They started quietly towards the gate; his arm was linked, fatherly, into hers. 'Papa José,' she called him. How that would have stung if she had taken advantage from the first of the daughterhood upon which he had so loudly insisted. Now it was real, inevitable, sincere. It stood for the most precious thing in his life. Even Don Antonio had ceased to look askance upon their relationship.

And he took this evening stroll, daily, to please Pilár. Their long shadows trailed behind them; Pilár held her fan to her forehead to mitigate the power of the sun. A few countryfolk wandered ahead of them along the lane; mainly old women with black handkerchiefs over their heads, which the dust turned to grey; a couple of noisy middle-aged harridans whose quarrelling disturbed the silence; a little dirty, ragged girl, who waited for Don José and Pilár to catch up with her and then stretched a rapacious little claw with, '*Cinco centimos, señores! Cinco centimos!*'

Benediction was being gabbled in the chapel by a young, pimply-faced priest when they got there. The little girl miraculously produced a rag from some part of her unspeakable garments and slipped through the tattered leather curtain as Don José held it aside for Pilár. There was a smell of decay, dirt, stale incense and turnips; the latter could be seen, when the eye accustomed itself to the darkness, piled against the chancel walls, together with broken chairs and chopped firewood. The doubtful red, or blue, or sugar-pink or gilt of images shone in dim streaks through the grimy glass of the shrines. There were very few



people in the church; peasant women in black kneeling on the floor, with her arms outstretched, cruciform, before a dark, invisible Virgin high on the walls; the arms, naked to the elbow, were like shrivelled leather.

Don José sat down upon the bench near the chair on which Pilár was kneeling, laid his hat on the seat, and spat, slowly and reverently, between his knees. Without looking directly at the rapt figure of the girl, he was conscious of her stillness, her devotion, and the slipping of the beads through her fingers. Gradually he became bathed in the aura of her serenity; the mumble of the priest, the darkness of the church, its old, weary, initiate and macerated smell of a thing that may be weakened by many torments but holds eternally by life; the motionless peasants, the occasional scrape of a chair or of feet, the fan of dusty light that opened suddenly upon the floor as a newcomer lifted the curtain, lulled that part of him in which his self-torment dwelt. For a short space of time all his corruption, his worldly experience, his dissatisfactions, his resentments, his grudges, his vanities, his spleens, his acrimonies, dissolved themselves in a mystical element which seemed to his imagination to generate itself from the kneeling form of Pilár. For an inapprehensible moment in time he became innocent and pure as a babe; and this state was succeeded by a tranquillity so frail and fleeting that he could never afterwards quite recall it, or understand why it reserved itself always for this hour of the day when, to please Pilár, he waited for her to say her prayers.

Often, during those days, he marvelled at himself: that he could be, for the most part, so content in these alien surroundings; that he had actually brought himself to the point of relinquishing all those things which, a year ago, he would have said were such integral parts of his life that, were one of them removed, he would no longer think it worth while to live: the pettily important routine of his life in Granada, his circle of acquaintances, the company he kept in the wine-shops, the small chicaneries that he indulged as a form of amusement, the cynical jesting of his friends, his importance as an individual and as a

member of the municipality. How had he come to exchange these for an existence hardly less innocent than that of the Garden of Eden, for the company of two virtuous women? What bizarre ending was this for the career of El Bailarín?

Then it came to him that when the great things in life are gone the petty ones cease to matter. One after another he had lost the great things; first his profession; then, one by one, his three sons. How was it, he marvelled, that one could lose so much and yet continue to pursue the routine forced upon one by existence? The necessary acts of eating and drinking were not less necessary because Pepe was killed and Miguel and Juan had left home. What was it that gave one the motive to go on?

The instinct to make and save money was still there, but it no longer exerted its drive upon his actions; the greenness of a grape, the heaviness of a lemon-tree, these brought mild, pleasurable sensations apart from the financial gain they represented, yet did not disturb the sealed death-chamber of his heart. A curious, muffled peace lay upon his life; whence did it derive?

To begin with he associated it entirely with Pilár. From the hour of Pepe's funeral, when she had come to him in front of them all and put her arms about him, calling him the name he had grown to love, he had leaned upon her in a way that would have crushed any girl less subtly strengthened. But out of her love for him had grown a wisdom and maturity that none of her previous experiences had brought her. The love for which he now asked her was one she was supremely capable of giving; it contained, overwhelmingly, that quality of the maternal which he sorely needed.

And gradually, as he came to recognize his dependence upon her, it began to seem to him that from the very moment of their first meeting they were destined to this relationship: that all the evil which had come in between the beginning and the end was caused by his ignorant attempts to divert the course of destiny. She was like a child; in every sentence she spoke she continued to reveal to him her utter ignorance of all worldly matters which should have been a commonplace to any girl of her age, and yet

she had her speechless wisdom, her power—seemingly, at least—to understand, with compassion in her eyelids. ‘I have brought an angel to my house.’ A few years ago he would not, he knew, have welcomed an angel; now, having learnt the bitter lesson of the failure of human ties, he turned at last towards the spiritual.

Not, either, to that spiritual which was represented by the teachings of Don Antonio. It was long before they made up the quarrel that rose out of the priest’s coming to the casa with the words of priestly consolation upon his lips. Out of Pilár Don José drew more conviction of divine comfort than out of any source Don Antonio was capable of offering him. Pilár’s devotion to her religious duties for a while irritated him, and, sensing this, the girl did her best in every way to keep them from his notice. The only way in which he could receive the benefits of the Church’s consolation was, indirectly, from her hands: that it was her religion which strengthened her and enabled her to give him that which he needed did not occur to him.

But, gradually and without knowing it, Don José’s mind drew closer to those two absent sons whose loss was a part of his sorrow: for behind that God of the Church which he rejected he began to glimpse the Power which had directed all the passages of his life. He saw that Power in anger during his riotous years; he saw Its punishments following him throughout time; and he saw Its forgiveness, embodied in the girl who had grown to be the centre of his life. As he sat in the church, waiting for her to finish her prayers, he had a sense of loving vigilance and tolerance for a wisdom that was less, after all, than his own. His God was greater than the God she worshipped; no paraphernalia of rosary, candlelight, and incense was required by his God; that distant, half-apprehended yet inimitable Power that could crush all lesser gods in the hollow of Its mighty hand.

And through this God he was coming, slowly and uncertainly, into a way of peace. It was this God which, in just reward for the one single pure and selfless action he had ever performed in his life, had given him Pilár: as a reminder of all the good there was in the world, as an antidote to all his bitterness, and as a

perpetual reminder that the heart of man must become simple, meek, and child-like. How far he was from realizing that, only he knew; nor did he struggle towards it, because he felt that, if the Power willed it, so he would become; and, if not, he was José Díaz Marquez, a man who had lost all, yet found a single thing whose value time alone would prove.

At this point in his reverie—so often repeated that he had become used to tracing it, step by step, in the same order of thought, day after day—his thoughts became entirely secular. He thought of Felipa at home, preparing his supper; she who had borne the vagaries of his sick appetite and coaxed it into health again, so that now the juices of anticipation ran freely under his tongue at the prospect of the dishes she was preparing. He thought of Don Alonso, his faithful friend, coming to break the solitude of the night for him. He thought of Pepe, and this, thought, which, during the day, still drove a knife into his bosom, did not pain him, although he could feel the moisture coming to his eyes. He thought no longer of the way Pepe had dragged his pride in the dust, but of his mad, brave end. He thought of Miguel and Juan, and of their close devotion that excluded him, and had no bitterness towards either. He thought of the setting of his own sun; and it seemed as though, with his arm through Pilár's, he could walk straight into its dying beams until nothing remained but darkness; her hand would lie in his, and her voice in the dark would come to him in a whisper, as it came now—

*'Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus——'*

—and another sun would rise . . .

*Granada,  
Grange-over-Sands, 1933.*







